



979:90



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THE
P R E F A C E
TO THE
R E A D E R.

BEING, I hope, for the remainder of my Life, released from that irksome and unpleasant work of Controversy and wrangling about Religion, I shall now turn my thoughts to something more agreeable to my temper, and of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of true Religion, to the happiness of Human Society, and the Reformation of the World.

I have no intention to reflect upon any that stand up in defence of the Truth and contend earnestly for it, endeavouring in the spirit of meekness to re-

claim those that are in Error. For I doubt not but a very good man may upon several occasions be almost unavoidably engaged in Controversies of Religion; and if he have a head clear and cool enough, so as to be master of his own Notions and temper in that hot kind of Service, he may therein do considerable advantage to the Truth: Though a man that hath once drawn blood in Controversy, as Mr. Mede expresseth it, is seldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards.

For this reason a good Man should not be very willing, when his Lord comes, to be found so doing, and as it were beating his fellow-servants: And all Controversy, as it is usually managed, is little better. A good man would be loth to be taken out of the World reeking hot from a sharp contention with a perverse Adversary; and not a little out of countenance, to find

find himself in this temper translated into the calm and peaceable Regions of the Blessed, where nothing but perfect charity and good will reign for ever.

I know not whether St. Paul, who had been taken up into the third Heavens, did by that Question of his, Where is the Disputer of THIS WORLD? intend to insinuate that this wrangling work hath place only in this World, and upon this Earth where only there is a Dust to be raised; but will have no place in the Other. But whether St. Paul intended this or not, the thing it self I think is true, that in the other World all things will be clear and past dispute. To be sure, among the Blessed; and probably also among the Miserable, unless fierce and furious Contentions, with great Heat without Light, about things of no moment and concernment to them, should be design'd for a part of their Torment.

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As to the following Sermons, I am sensible that the Style of them is more loose and full of words, than is agreeable to just and exact Discourses: But so I think the Style of Popular Sermons ought to be. And therefore I have not been very careful to mend this matter; chusing rather that they should appear in that native simplicity in which, so many years ago, they were first fram'd, than dress'd up with too much care and Art. As they are, I hope the candid and ingenuous Readers will take them in good part.

*And I do heartily wish that all that are concern'd in the respective Duties, treated on in the following Sermons, would be persuaded so to lay them to heart as to put them effectually in practice: That how much soever the Reformation of this corrupt and degenerate Age in which we live is almost utterly to be despair'd of, we may yet have a more comfortable prospect of future Times, by
seeing*

seeing the foundation of a better World begun to be laid in the careful and conscientious discharge of the Duties here mention'd: That by this means the Generations to come may know God, and the Children yet unborn may fear the Lord.

I have great reason to be sensible how fast the infirmities of Age are coming upon me, and therefore must work the Works of Him, whose Providence hath placed me in the Station wherein I am, whilst it is Day, because the Night cometh when no man can work.

*I knew very well, before I enter'd upon this great and weighty Charge, my own manifold defects, and how unequal my best abilities were for the due discharge of it; but I did not feel this so sensibly as I now do every day more and more. And therefore that I might make some small amends for greater failings, I knew not how better to place
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the broken hours I had to spare from almost perpetual business of one kind or other, than in preparing something for the Publick that might be of use to recover the decayed Piety and Virtue of the present Age; in which iniquity doth so much abound, and the Love of God and Religion is grown so cold.

To this end I have chosen to publish these plain Sermons, and to recommend them to the serious perusal and faithful practice both of the Pastors and People committed to my Charge; earnestly beseeching Almighty God, that by his Blessing they may prove effectual to that good end for which they are sincerely design'd.

C O N-

CONCERNING
Resolution and Stedfastness in Religion.

A
 S E R M O N

Preached at
 St. LAWRENCE JURY,
 JUNE the 3d. 1684.

J O S H. XXIV. 15.

— *But as for me and my house, we
 will serve the Lord.*



AFTER Joshua had
 brought the People
 of Israel into the
 promised Land and
 settled them in the
 quiet possession of
 it, his great desire was to establish
 B them

them in the true Religion, namely, in the Worship of the *One true God*, who had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*, and given them the possession of that good Land, the Land of *Canaan*.

And now finding himself weak and declining, being an hundred and ten years old, and fearing lest after his death the People should fall off from the true Religion to the worship of Idols, he like a wise and good Governour considers with himself what courtie he had best to take to keep them firm and stedfast in their Religion, and to prevent their defection to the *Idolatry* of the Nations round about them.

Ch. 23. V. 1. And to this end he calls a general Assembly of all *Israel*, that is, of the *Elders*, and *Heads*, and *Judges*, and *Officers* of the several *Tribes*; and in a very wise and eloquent *Speech* represents to them in what

what a miraculous manner God had driven out the Nations before them, much greater and stronger Nations than they, and had given them their Land to possess it. And, in a word, had performed punctually all that he had promised to them.

And therefore they ought to take great heed to themselves, to love God and to serve Him; and if they did not, he tells them that it should come to pass, that as all good things are Ch. 23. 15. come upon you which the Lord your God promised you, so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good Land which the Lord your God hath given you.

After this, he calls them together a second time, and gives them a brief historical account and deduction of the great Mercies of God to them and their Fathers, from the days of Abraham, whom he had called out from among his

Idolatrous Kindred and Countrey-men, unto that Day.

From the consideration of all which, he earnestly exhorts them to renew their Covenant with God; and for his particular satisfaction, before he left the World, solemnly to promise that they would for ever serve God and forsake the service of Idols: *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: And put away the Gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.*

And then in the Text, by a very elegant Scheme of Speech he does, as it were, once more set them at liberty; and, as if they had never engaged themselves to God by Covenant before, he leaves them to their free choite: *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve; whether the*

the Gods whom your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whose Land ye dwell.

Not that they were at liberty whether they would serve the true God, or not; but to insinuate to them that Religion ought to be their free choice: And likewise, that the true Religion hath those real advantages on its Side, that it may safely be referr'd to any considerate Man's choice: *If it seem evil unto you*; as if he had said, *If after all the demonstrations which God hath given of his Miraculous Presence among you, and the mighty obligations which he hath laid upon you by bringing you out of the Land of Egypt, and the House of Bondage by so outstretched an Arm; and by driving out the Nations before you, and giving you their Land to possess: If after all this, you can think it*

fit to quit the service of *this God*, and to worship the *Idols* of the Nations whom you have subdued, those vanquished and baffled Deities : If you can think it reasonable so to do, but surely you cannot ; then take your choice : *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve.*

And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own Resolution, which he hopes will also be theirs ; and as he had heretofore been their *Captain*, so now he offers himself to be their *Example* : But whether they will follow him or not, he for his part is fix'd and immovable in this Resolution ; *But as for ME and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

In effect he tells them ; I have proposed the best Religion to your choice, and I cannot but think,
nay

may I cannot but hope, that you will all stedfastly adhere to it. It is so reasonable and wise, so much your Interest and your Happiness to do it. But if you should do otherwise, if you should be so weak as not to discern the Truth, so wilful and so wicked as not to embrace it : Though you should all make another choice, and run away from the true God to the worship of Idols ; I for my part am stedfastly resolved what to do : In a case so manifest, in a matter so reasonable, no Number, no Example shall prevail with me to the contrary ; I will, if need be, stand alone in that which is so evidently and unquestionably Right : And though this whole Nation should revolt all at once from the Worship of the true God , and join with the rest of the World in a false Religion and in the Worship

of Idols ; and mine were the only Family left in all *Israel*, nay in the whole World, that continued to worship the God of *Israel*, I would still be of the same mind ; I would still persist in this Resolution, and act according to it ; *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

A Resolution truly worthy of so great a Prince and so good a Man : In which he is a double Pattern to us.

First, of the brave Resolution of a good Man, namely, That if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion : *As for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

Secondly, of the pious Care of a good Father and Master of a Family, to train up those under his Charge in the true Religion and Worship
of

of God : *As for me and MY HOUSE,*
we will serve the Lord.

I shall at this time, by God's assistance, treat of the *First* of these, namely,

I. Of the brave Resolution of a good Man, that if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of God's true Religion : *Chuse you this day, says Joshua, whom ye will serve ; but as for ME, I will serve the Lord.* Joshua here puts the Case at the utmost extremity, That not only the great Nations of the World, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, and all the lesser Nations round about them, and in whose Land they dwelt, were all long since revolted to *Idolatry*, and pretended great Antiquity and long Prescription for the Worship of

of their false Gods: But he supposeth yet further, That the only true and visible Church of God then known in the World, the People of *Israel*, should likewise generally revolt and forsake the Worship of the *true God*, and cleave to the Service of *Idols*: Yet in this Case, if we could suppose it to happen, he declares his firm and stedfast Resolution to adhere to the Worship of the true God: And though all others should fall off from it, that he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion: *But as for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

In the handling of this Argument I shall do these *two* things.

First, I shall consider the matter of this Resolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

Secondly I shall endeavour to vindicate the *reasonableness* of this Reso-

Resolution from the *Objections* to which this singular and peremptory kind of Resolution may seem liable.

First, I shall consider the *matter* of this Resolution, and the due *bounds* and *limits* of it.

1st. The *matter* of this Resolution. *Joshua* here resolves that if need were, and things were brought to that pass, he would stand alone, or with very few adhering to him, in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion. And this is not a mere Supposition of an impossible Case, which can never happen: For it may, and hath really and in fact happen'd in several Ages and Places of the World.

There hath been a general Apostacy of some great part of God's Church from the Belief and Profession of the true Religion
to

to Idolatry, and to *damnable Errours and Heresies*: And some good Men have, upon the matter, stood alone in the open Profession of the true Religion, in the midst of this general Defection from it.

1 Kings,
18. 18.

Elijah in that general Revolt of the People of *Israel*, when they had forsaken the Covenant of the Lord, and broken down his Altars, and slain his Prophets, and he only, as he thought, was left to stand alone: I say, in this Case when, as he verily believed, he had no body to stand by him, he was very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts; and with an undaunted courage stood up for the Worship of the true God, and reproved *Ahab* to his face for his defection to the Worship of Idols.

Dan. 3.

And those three brave *Youths*, in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, did in the like resolute and undaunted manner refuse to obey the Command
of

of the great King Nebuchadnezzar, to worship the Image which he had set up; when all others Submitted, and paid Honour to it: Telling him plainly, *If it be so, our God whom* v. 17, 18. *we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand: If not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden Image which thou hast set up.*

In like manner, and with the same Spirit and courage, Daniel withstood the Decree of Darius, which forbade men to ask a Petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of the King only; and this under the pain of being cast into the Den of Lions: and when all others gave obedience to it, he set open the windows of his chamber towards Jerusalem, and kneeled down upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks, as he did afore time. v. 10.

In

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In the prevalency of the *Arian* Heresie *Athanasius* almost stood alone in the profession and maintenance of the Truth. And in the Reign of *Antichrist* the true Church of God is represented by a Woman flying into the *Wilderness*, and living there in obscurity for a long time ; insomuch that the Professours of the Truth should hardly be found. And yet during that Degeneracy of so great a Part of the *Christian* Church, and the prevalency of *Antichrist* for so many Ages, some few in every Age did appear who did resolutely own the Truth and bear Witness to it with their Blood : But these did almost stand alone and by themselves, like a few scattered Sheep wandering up and down in a wide *Wilderness*.

Thus, in the heighth of *Popery*, *Wickliffe* appear'd here in *England* ;
and

and *Hierome* of *Prague* and *John Hufs* in *Germany* and *Bohemia*. And in the beginning of the *Reformation*, when *Popery* had quite over-run these *Western Parts* of the *World* and subdued her *Enemies* on every side, and *Antichrist* sat securely in the quiet possession of his *Kingdom*; *Luther* arose, a bold and rough Man, but a fit *Wedge* to cleave in sunder so hard and knotty a *Block*; and appeared stoutly against the gross *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the *Church of Rome*; and for a long time stood alone, and with a most invincible spirit and courage maintained his ground and resisted the united malice and force of *Antichrist* and his *Adherents*; and gave him so terrible a *Wound*, that he is not yet perfectly healed and recovered of it.

So that for a Man to stand alone, or with a very few adhering
to

to him and standing by him, is not a mere imaginary Supposition, but a Case that hath really and in fact happen'd in several Ages and Places of the World. Let us then proceed to consider in the

2d. place, the due *limits* and *bounds* of this peremptory Resolution. In all matters of *Faith* and *Practice* which are *plain* and *evident* either from *Natural Reason*, or from *Divine Revelation*, this *Resolution* seems to be very reasonable: But in things *doubtful* a modest man, and every man hath reason to be so, would be very apt to be stagger'd by the judgment of a very Wise man; and much more of many such, and especially by the unanimous Judgment of the generality of Men; the general Voice and Opinion of Mankind being next to the Voice of God himself.

For

For in matters of an *indifferent* nature, which God hath neither commanded nor forbidden, such as are many of the *Circumstances* and *Ceremonies* of God's Worship, a man would not be singular, much less stiff and immovable in his singularity; but would be apt to yield and surrender himself to the *general Vote* and *Opinion*, and to comply with the *common Custom* and *Practice*; and much more with the *Rules* and *Constitutions* of *Authority*, whether *Civil* or *Ecclesiastical*. Because in things *lawful* and *indifferent*, we are bound by the *Rules* of *Decency* and *Civility* not to thwart the *general Practice*; and by the *Commands* of *God*, we are certainly obliged to obey the *lawful Commands* of *lawful Authority*.

But in things plainly contrary to the evidence of *Sense* or *Reason*, or to the *Word* of *God*, a man would

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complement no Man, or Number of Men; nor would he pin his Faith upon any Church in the World; much less upon any *single Man*, no not the *Pope*; no, though there were never so many probable Arguments brought for the proof of his *Infallibility*.

In this Case; a Man would be *singular* and stand alone against the whole World; against the wrath and rage of a *King* and all the terrors of his *fiery Furnace*; as in other matters, a Man would not believe all the *Learned Men* in the World against the clear evidence of *Sense* and *Reason*. If all the great *Mathematicians* of all Ages, *Archimedes*, and *Euclide*, and *Apollonius*, and *Diophantus* &c. could be supposed to meet together in a *General Council*, and should there declare in the most *solemn* manner, and give it under their *Hands* and *Seals*,
that

that *twice two did not make four, but five*; this would not move me in the least to be of their mind; nay, I who am no *Mathematician* would maintain the contrary, and would persist in it without being in the least startled by the positive Opinion of these great and *learned men*; and should most certainly conclude, that they were either all of them out of their Wits, or that they were byassed by some Interest or other, and swayed against the clear evidence of Truth and the full conviction of their own Reason to make such a determination as this. They might indeed overrule the Point by their Authority, but in my inward judgment I should still be where I was before.

Just so in matters of *Religion*, if any *Church*, though with never so glorious and confident a pretence

to *Infallibility*, should declare for *Transubstantiation*, that is, that the *Bread and Wine* in the *Sacrament*, by vertue of the *Consecration* of the *Priest*, are substantially changed into the *natural Body and Blood* of *Christ*; this is so notoriously contrary both to the *Sense* and *Reason* of *Mankind*, that a *Man* would chuse to stand single in the opposition of it, and laugh at or rather pity the rest of the *World* that could be so servilely blind as seemingly to conspire in the belief of so monstrous an *Absurdity*.

And in like manner, if any *Church* should declare, that *Images* are to be worshipped; or that the *Worship* of *God* is to be performed in an *unknown Tongue*; and that the *H. Scriptures*, which contain the *Word and Will* of *God*, and teach men what they are to believe and do in order to their eternal

ternal Salvation, are to be lock'd up, and kept concealed from the People in a Language which they do not understand, lest if they were permitted the free use of them in their *Mother Tongue* they should know more of the Mind and Will of God than is convenient for the common People to know, whose *Devotion* and *Obedience* to the Church does mainly depend upon their *Ignorance*: Or should declare, that the *Sacrifice of Christ* was not offer'd *once for all*, but is and ought to be repeated ten Millions of times every Day: And that the People ought to receive the *Communion in one kind only*, and the *Cup* by no means to be trusted with them for fear the *Profane Beards* of the *Laity* should drink of it: And that the *saving efficacy* of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the *intention of the Priest*, without which the Receiver can have no

benefit by them: These are all of them so plainly contrary to *Scripture*, and most of them in *Reason* so absurd, that the Authority of no Church whatsoever can oblige a man to the belief of them.

Gal. 1. 7,
8, 9.

Nay, I go yet further, that being evidently contrary to the Doctrine of the *Gospel*, though an *Apostle*, or an *Angel from Heaven* should declare them, we ought to reject them. And for this I have St. *Paul's* authority and warrant, who speaking of some that perverted the *Gospel of Christ* by teaching things contrary to it, *Though we*, says he, or an *Angel from Heaven*, preach any other *Gospel* unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed: As we said before, so say I now again, though an *Apostle*, though an *Angel from Heaven* preach any other *Gospel* unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed. You see
he

he repeats it over again, to express not only his own confident assurance, but the certainty of the thing. And here is an *Anathema* with a witness, which we may confidently oppose to all the *Anathema's* which the *Council of Trent* hath so liberally denounced against all those who shall presume to gainsay these *New Doctrines* of their Church; which are in truth *another Gospel*, than that which our *B. Saviour* and his *Apostles* taught: And yet on their Side there is neither an *Apostle*, nor an *Angel* from *Heaven* in the Case.

To give but one *Instance* more: If *Bellarmin* shall tell me, as he expressly does, That if the *Pope* should declare *Virtue* to be *Vice*, and *Vice* to be *Virtue*, I were bound to believe him unless I would sin against Conscience: And if all the World should say the same that *Bellarmin* does, namely,

that this *Infallible Declarer* of *Virtue* and *Vice* were to be believed and followed; yet I could not possibly be of their mind, for this plain and undeniable Reason; because if *Virtue* and *Vice* be all one, then Religion is nothing; since the main Design of Religion is to teach men the difference between *Virtue* and *Vice*, and to oblige them to practise the *one* and to refrain from the *other*: And if Religion be nothing, then Heaven and Hell are nothing: And if Heaven be nothing, then an *infallible Guide* thither is of no use and to no manner of purpose; because he is a Guide no whither, and so his *great Office* ceases and falls of it self.

And now lest any should think me singular in this *Affertion*, and that thereby I give a great deal too much to the single Judgment of private Persons, and too little
to

to the Authority of a Church, I will produce the deliberate Judgment of a very Learned Man and a great Assertour of the Church's Authority, concerning the matter I am now speaking of: I mean Mr. *Hooker*, in his deservedly admired *Book of Ecclesiastical Policy*. His words are these, I grant, says he, that Proof derived from the Authority of Man's Judgment is not able to work that Assurance which doth grow by a stronger proof: And therefore although ten thousand General Councils should set down one and the same Definitive Sentence concerning any Point of Religion whatsoever, yet one Demonstrative Reason alledged, or one Testimony cited from the Word of God himself to the contrary, could not chuse but oversway them all: In as much as for them to be deceived it is not so impossible, as it is that Demonstrative Reason or Divine Testimony should deceive.

And

And again, For men, says he, to be tyed and led by Authority, as it were with a kind of Captivity of Judgment, and though there be Reason to the contrary not to listen to it, but follow like Beasts the first in the Herd, this were Brutish.

Again, That the Authority of Men should prevail with Men, either against or above Reason is no part of OUR Belief. Companies of Learned Men, though they be never so great and Reverend, are to yield unto Reason, the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by the simplicity of the Person which doth alledg it; but being found to be sound and good, the bare Opinion of men to the contrary must of necessity stoop and give place. And this he delivers not only as his own particular Judgment, but that which he apprehended to be the Judgment of the Church of England.

I have

I have produced these clear and positive *Testimonies* of so learned and judicious a Person, and of so great esteem in our Church, on purpose to prevent any misapprehension, as if by this Discourse I intended to derogate from the Authority of the Church and her just and reasonable Determinations, in things no wise contrary to plain Reason or the *Word of God*. And beyond this pitch no judicious *Protestant*, that I know of, ever strain'd the Authority of the Church. I proceed now in the

Second place, to vindicate the Reasonableness of this Resolution from the *Objections* to which this singular and peremptory kind of Resolution may seem liable, as

First, it may very speciously be *Obj. 1.* said, that this does not seem modest for a man to set up his own pri-

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First, it may very speciously be *Obj. 1.* said, that this does not seem modest for a man to set up his own pri-

private Judgment against the general Suffrage and Vote. And it is very true, as I said before, that about things *indifferent* a man should not be stiff and singular; and in things *doubtful* and *obscure* a man should not be over-confident of his own Judgment, and insist peremptorily upon it against the general Opinion: But in things that are plain and evident, either from *Scripture* or *Reason*, it is neither immodesty, nor a culpable singularity, for a man to stand alone in the defence of the Truth. Because in such a Case a man does not oppose his own single and private Judgment to the Judgment of *Many*, but the common Reason of Mankind and the Judgment of God plainly declared in his Word.

If the generality of men should turn *Atheists* and *Infidels*, and should deny

deny the *Being* of God, or his *Providence*; the *Immortality* of mens Souls, and the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of another World: Or should deny the *Truth* of the *Gospel* and of the *Christian* Religion, it would not certainly be any breach of modesty for a man to appear single, if no body else would stand by him, in the resolute defence of these great Truths.

In like manner, when a whole Church, though never so large and numerous, shall conspire together to corrupt the *Christian* Religion so far as to impose upon Mankind, under the name of *Christian Doctrines* and *Articles of Faith*, things plainly contrary to the Sense and Reason of Mankind, and to the clear and express Word of God, why must a Man needs be thought immodest, if he oppose such gross Errors and Corruptions
of

of the *Christian* Doctrine? And what reason have the *Church* of *Rome* to talk of modesty in this Case, when they themselves have the face to impose upon Mankind the belief of things contrary to what they and every man else sees? As they do in their Doctrine of Transubstantiation: And to require of them to do what God hath expressly forbidden, as in the Worship of *Images*; besides a great many other *Idolatrous* Practices of that Church: To deny the People the free use of the *H. Scriptures*, and the *publick Service* of God in a *known Tongue*; contrary to the very end and design of all Religion, and in affront to the common Reason and Liberty of Mankind.

Obj. 2.

Secondly, it is pretended that it is more prudent for private Persons to err with the Church, than to be so pertinacious in their own
Opi.

Opinions. To which I answer, that it may indeed be pardonable in some Cases to be led into mistake by the Authority of those to whose Judgment and Instruction we ought to pay a great deference and submission: Provided always it be in things which are not plain and necessary; but surely it can never be prudent to err with any number, how great soever, in matters of Religion which are of moment, merely for *Numbers* sake: But to comply with the *known Errors* and *Corruptions* of any Church whatsoever is certainly damnable.

Thirdly, it is pretended yet further, that men shall sooner be excused in following the Church, than any particular *Man* or *Señt*. To this I answer, that it is very true if the matter be doubtful, and especially if the Probabilities be equal, or near equal on both Sides:

But

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But if the Errour be gross and palpable, it will be no excuse, to have followed any number of Men, or any Church whatsoever. For here the competition is not between Men and Men, but between God and Men: And in this Case we must forsake all Men to follow God and his Truth. *Thou shalt in no wise follow a Multitude in a known Errour*, is a Rule which in Reason is of equal obligation with that *Divine Law, Thou shalt in no wise follow a Multitude to do evil*; or rather is comprehended in it, because to comply with a *known Errour* is certainly to do Evil.

And this very *Objection* the *Jews* made against our *B. Saviour* and the Doctrine which He taught, that the *Guides* and *Governours* of the *Jewish Church* did utterly differ from *Him*, and were of a contrary mind, *Have any of the Rulers,*
say

say they, *believed on him*? What? will you be wiser than your Rulers and Governours? What? follow the Doctrine of *one single Man* against the unanimous Judgment and Sentence of the *Great Sanhedrim*, to whom the Trial of *Doctrines* and pretended *Prophets* doth of right belong?

But, as plausible as this *Objection* may seem to be, it is to be considered that in a corrupt and degenerate Church the *Guides* and *Rulers* of it are commonly the worst, and the most deeply engaged in the *Errours* and *Corruptions* of it. They brought them in at first, and their Successours, who have been bred up in the belief and practice of them, are concern'd to uphold and maintain them: And so long a *Prescription* gives a kind of *Sacred Stamp* even to *Error*, and an Authority not to be opposed and resisted.

D

And

And thus it was in the corrupt State of the *Jewish Church*, in our *Saviour's Time*: And so likewise in that great Degeneracy of the *Christian Church*, in the Times of *Popery*, *their Rulers made them to err*: Inſomuch that when *Martin Luther* appeared in opposition to the *Errors* and *Superſtitions* of that Church, and was hard preſs'd with this very *Objection* which the *Phariſees* urg'd againſt our *Saviour*, he was forc'd to bolt out a kind of unmannerly Truth, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quàm inter Reverendiſſimos*, Religion, ſays he, is never in greater hazard and worſe treated, then amongſt the moſt Reverend; meaning the *Pope* and his *Cardinals*, and all the *Romiſh Hierarchy* who had their dependance upon them.

Obj. 4.

Fourthly, it is *Objected*, That as on the one hand there may be danger of *Error* in following blindly the

the Belief of the Church, so on the other hand there is as great a danger of *Schism* in forsaking the Communion of the Church upon pretence of *Errours* and *Corruptions*. Very true; but where great *Errours* and *Corruptions* are not only pretended, but are real and evident: and where our *Compliance* with those *Errours* and *Corruptions* is made a necessary Condition of our Communion with that Church: In that Case, the guilt of *Schism*, how great a Crime soever it be, doth not fall upon those who forsake the Communion of that Church, but upon those who drive them out of it by the *sinful Conditions* which they impose upon them.

And this is truly the Case between *Us* and the Church of *Rome*, as we are ready to make good, and have fully done it upon all Occasions; and they have never yet

D 2 been

been able to vindicate and clear themselves of those gross *Errours* and *Corruptions* which have been charged upon them, and which they require of all their *Members* as necessary *Conditions* of *Communion* with them here, and of *eternal Salvation* hereafter.

For we do not Object to them doubtful matters, but things as plain as any are contained in the *Bible*, as every body would see if they durst but let every body read it. The *Worship* of *Images* is there as plainly forbidden in the *Decalogue*, as *Murther* and *Adultery* are. The *Communion* in both *Kinds* is as exprefs an *Institution* of our *Saviour*, as any in all the *New Testament*; and even as the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper* it self; only that *Church* pretends to a *Dispensing Power*, as a *Privilege inherent* in their *Church* and *inseparable* from it.

And,

And, to add but one *Instance* more ; *Publick Prayers* and the *Service* of God in an *unknown Tongue*, are as plainly and fully declared against by *St. Paul*, in a long *Chapter* upon this single Argument, as any one thing in all his *Epistles*.

These things are plain and undeniable, and being so, are a full justification not only of the *Church of England*, in the *Reformation* which She thought fit to make within her self from the gross *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the *Church of Rome* ; but likewise of particular *Persons* who have at any time for the same Reasons withdrawn themselves from Her Communion, in any of the *Popish Countries* : Yea though that *single Person* should happen to be in those Circumstances that he could not have the Opportunity of holding Communion with any other *Church*, that was free

from those *Errours* and *Corruptions*, and which did not impose them as *necessary Conditions* of *Communion*.

For if any *Church* fall off to *Idolatry*, every good *Christian* not only may, but ought to forsake *Her Communion*; and ought rather to stand single and alone in the *Profession* of the pure and true *Religion*, than to continue in the *Communion* of a corrupt and *Idolatrous Church*.

I know that some Men are so fond of the *Name* of a *Church* that they can very hardly believe that any thing which bears that glorious *Title* can miscarry or do any thing so much amiss as to give just occasion to any of her *Members* to break off from *Her Communion*: What? the *Church* err? That is such an *Absurdity*, as is by many thought sufficient to put any *Objection*

tion out of countenance. That the *whole Church*, that is, that *all the Christians* in the World should at any time fall off to *Idolatry* and into *Errours* and *Practices* directly contrary to the *Christian Doctrine* revealed in the *H. Scriptures*, is on all hands, I think, denied : But that any *Particular Church* may fall into such *Errours* and *Practices* is, I think, as universally granted : Only in this Case they demand to have the *Roman Catholick Church* excepted : And why I pray ? Because though the *Roman Church* is a *Particular Church*, it is also the *Universal Church* : If this can be, and good sense can be made of a *Particular-Universal Church*, then the *Roman Church* may demand this high Privilege of being exempted from the Fate of all other Churches ; but if the *Roman-Catholick*, that is a *Particular-Universal Church* be a gross

and palpable *Contradiction*, then it is plain that the *Church of Rome* hath no more pretence to this *Privilege*, than any other *Particular Church* whatsoever.

And which is yet more, some men talk of these matters at that rate, as if a man who thought himself obliged to quit the Communion of the *Church of Rome*, should happen to be in those *Circumstances* that he had no Opportunity of joining himself to any other Communion, he ought in that Case to give over all thoughts of Religion, and not be so conceited and presumptuous as to think of going to Heaven alone by himself.

It is without doubt a very great Sin to despise the Communion of the Church, or to break off from it so long as we can continue in it without Sin: But if things should once come to that *Pass* that we
must

must either disobey God for company, or stand alone in our obedience to Him, we ought most certainly to obey God whatever comes of it; and to profess his Truth, whether any body else will join with us in that Profession or not.

And they who speak otherwise condemn the whole *Reformation*, and do in effect say that *Martin Luther* had done a very ill thing in breaking off from the *Church of Rome*, if no body else would have joined with him in that honest Design. And yet if it had been so, I hope God would have given him the Grace and Courage to have stood alone in so good and glorious a *Cause*, and to have laid down his Life for it.

And for any man to be of another Opinion, is just as if a man upon great deliberation should
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chuse rather to be drowned, than to be saved either by a *Plank* or a *small Boat* ; or to be carried into the Harbour any other way, than in a *Great Ship* of so many *hundred Tuns*.

In short, a good man must resolve to obey God and to profess his Truth, though all the World should happen to do otherwise. *Christ* hath promised to preserve his Church *to the end of the World*, that is, he hath engaged his Word that he will take care that there shall always be, in some part of the World or other, some persons that shall make a sincere Profession of his true Religion.

But He hath no where promised to preserve any *one Part* of his Church from such *Errours* and *Corruptions*, as may oblige all good men to quit the Communion of *that Part* ; yea though when they have

have done so, they may not know whither to resort for actual Communion with any other *sound Part* of the *Christian Church*. As it happened to some particular Persons, during the *Reign and Rage of Popery* in these *Western Parts* of the *Christian Church*.

The Result from all this *Discourse* is, to confirm and establish us all, in this *Hour of Temptation* and of the *Powers of Darknes*, in the well-grounded Belief of the necessity and justice of our *Reformation* from the *Errours and Corruptions* of the *Roman Church*. And to engage us to hold fast the *Profession of our Faith without wavering*: And not only to profess and promise as *Peter* did to our Lord, *though all men forsake thee, yet will not I*: But if there should be Occasion, to perform and make good this Promise with the hazard of all that is dear

to

to us, and even of Life it self
And whatever Trials God may
permit any of us to fall into, to
take up the pious Resolution of
Joshua here in the *Text*, that what-
ever others do, *WE* will serve the
Lord.

Cb. 1. v. 27. I will conclude my *Discourse*,
upon this *First Particular* in the
Text, with the *Exhortation* of *St. Paul*
to the *Philippians*, Only let your con-
versation be as it becometh the Gospel
of Christ. Stand fast in one Spirit, be
of one Mind, striving together for the
Faith of the Gospel : In nothing terri-
fied by your Adversaries, which to them
is an evident token of Perdition, but to
you of Salvation, and that of God.

And thus much may suffice to
have spoken to the *First* thing in the
Text, namely, the pious Resoluti-
on of *Joshua*, that if there were
Occasion and things were brought
to that extremity, he would stand
alone

alone in the Profession and Practice of God's true Religion: *Chuse you this Day whom ye will serve, but as for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

I should now have proceeded to the Second thing, and which indeed I chiefly intended to speak to from this Text, namely, the pious Care of a good Father and Master of a Family, to train up those under his Charge in the Religion and Worship of the true God: *As for Me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.* But this I shall not now enter upon, but defer it to some other Opportunity. Consider what ye have heard, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

S E R M O N II.

Concerning

Family - Religion.

CONCERNING
FAMILY-RELIGION.

A
S E R M O N

Preached at
St. LAWRENCE JURY,
J U L Y the 13th. 1684.

J O S H. XXIV. 15.

—*But as for me and MY HOUSE,
we will serve the Lord.*

I Shall now proceed to the *Second*
Point contained in the *Text*,
namely,

II. The *pious Care* of a good
Master and Father of a *Family*, to
train up those under his *Charge* in
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II.

the Worship and Service of the true God : *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.*

And this is the more necessary to be spoken to, because it is a great and very essential part of Religion, but strangely overlook'd and neglected in this loose and degenerate Age in which we live. It is a great Part of Religion ; for next to our *personal Homage and Service to Almighty God*, and the Care of our own Souls, it is incumbent upon us to make those, who are under our Charge and subject to our Authority, God's subjects, and his Children and Servants ; which is a much more honourable and happy Relation, than that which they bear to us.

Our Children are a natural part of our selves, and the rest of our Family are a Civil and Political part : And not only we our selves, but all

all that we have and that belongs to us is God's, and ought to be devoted to his service. And they that have the true Fear of God themselves, will be careful to teach it to others; to those especially who are under their more immediate Care and Instruction. And therefore God had so great a confidence concerning *Abraham* as to this particular, as to undertake for him, that being so very good a man himself he would not fail in so great and necessary a part of his Duty, *For I know him*, says God of him, *that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment.* God passeth his Word for him, that he would not only take care to instruct his Children and the rest of his numerous Family in the true Religion, but that he would likewise lay a

strict Charge upon them to propagate and transmit it to their Posterity.

And this certainly is the Duty of all *Fathers and Masters of Families*; and an essential part of Religion, next to serving God in our own Persons, to be very careful that all that belong to us do the same. For every man must not only give an account of himself to God, but of those likewise that are committed to his Charge that they do not miscarry through his neglect.

In speaking of this great and necessary Duty I shall do these *four* things.

First, I shall shew wherein it doth consist.

Secondly, I shall consider our *Obligation* to it, both in point of *Duty* and of *Interest*.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I shall enquire into the *Causes* of the so common and shameful neglect of this *Duty*, to the exceeding great Decay of *Piety* amongst us.

Fourthly, as a *Motive* and *Argument* to us to endeavour to retrieve the practice of this *Duty*, I shall represent to you the pernicious *Consequences* of the neglect of it, both with regard to *our Selves*, and to *the Publick*. In all which I shall be very brief, because things that are plain need not to be long.

I. I shall shew wherein the Practice of this *Duty* doth consist. And in this I am sure there is no need to be long, because this *Duty* is much better known than practised. The principal *Parts* of it are these following.

First, by setting up the constant Worship of God in our Families. By daily Prayers to God, every

Morning and Evening; and by reading some Portion of the *H. Scriptures* at those Times, especially out of the *Psalms* of *David*, and the *New Testament*. And this is so necessary to keep alive and to maintain a sense of God and Religion in the minds of men, that where it is neglected I do not see how any Family can in reason be esteemed a Family of *Christians*, or indeed to have any Religion at all.

And there are not wanting excellent *Helps* to this purpose for those that stand in need of them, as I think most Families do for the due and decent discharge of this solemn Duty of *Prayer*: I say, there are excellent *Helps* to this purpose, in the several *Books* of *Devotion* calculated for the private use of Families, as well as for *Secret Prayer* in our *Closets*.

So

So that besides the reading of the *H. Scriptures*, which are the great Fountains of *Divine Truth*; we may do well likewise to add to these other pious and profitable *Books*, which by their plainness are fitted for the instruction of all Capacities in the most necessary Points of *Belief* and *Practice*: Of which sort, God be thanked, there is an abundant store; but none that I think is more fitted for general and constant use than that *excellent Book* so well known by the Title of *The whole Duty of Man*: Because it is conveniently divided into *Parts* or *Sections*; one of which may be read in the *Family*, at any time when there is leisure for it; but more especially on the *Lord's Day*, when the whole Family may the more easily be brought and kept together, and have the Opportunity to attend upon these things without distraction. And,

And, which I must by no means omit, because it is in many Families already gone, and in others going out of Fashion : I mean a solemn acknowledgment of the Providence of God, by begging his *Blessing*, at our *Meals*, upon his good Creatures provided for our use ; and by returning *Thanks* to him for the benefit and refreshment of them : This being a piece of *Natural Religion* owned and practised in all Ages, and in most Places of the World ; but never so shamefully and scandalously neglected, and I fear by many slighted and despised, as it is amongst us at this Day : And most neglected where there is greatest Reason for the doing of it, I mean at the most plentiful *Tables*, and among those of highest Quality : As if Great Persons were ashamed, or thought scorn
to

to own from whence these Blessings come; like the Nation of the Jews, of whom God complains in the Prophet, *She knew not that I* Hos. 2. 8. *gave Her Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and multiplied her Silver and Gold: She knew not, that is, She would not acknowledge from whose Bounty all these Blessings came: Or, as if the poor were obliged to thank God for a little, but those who are fed to the full, and whose Cups overflow, so that they are almost every day surfeited of plenty, were not at least equally bound to make returns of thankful acknowledgment to the Great Giver of all good things; and to implore His Bounty and Blessing, upon whom the eyes of all do wait, that He may give them their meat in due Season.*

*O crooked and perverse Generation!
Do you thus Reason? Do ye thus
requite the Lord, foolish and unwise?*
This

This is a very sad and broad Sign of the prevalency of *Atheism* and *Infidelity* among us, when so *Natural* and so *Reasonable* a piece of *Religion*, so meet and equal an acknowledgment of the constant and daily Care and Providence of Almighty God towards us begins to grow out of Date and use ; in a Nation professing Religion , and the Belief of the *Being* and Providence of God. Is it not a righteous thing with God to take away his Blessings from us, when we deny Him this just and easy Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving ? Shall not God visit for this horrible *Ingratitude* ? And shall not his Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this ? Hear, O Heavens, and be ye horribly astonished at this ! I hope it cannot be thought misbecoming the meanest of God's Ministers , in a matter wherein the Honour of God is so nearly

nearly concerned, to reprove, even in the Highest and Greatest of the Sons of Men, so shameful and heinous a Fault, with a proportionable Vehemence and Severity.

Secondly, another, and that also a very considerable Part of this Duty, consists in instructing those committed to our Charge in the *Fundamental Principles*, and in the careful *Practice* of the *necessary Duties* of Religion; instilling these into *Children* in their tender years, as they are capable of them, *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept*, *here a little and there a little*; and into those that are more *grown up*, by proper and suitable means of instruction, and by furnishing them with such *Books* as are most proper to teach them those things in Religion which are most necessary by all to be believ'd and practis'd.

And

And in order hereunto we should take care that those under our Charge, our *Children* and *Servants*, should be taught to read, because this will make the business of Instruction much easier; so that if they are diligent and well-dispos'd they may, after having been taught the *first Principles* of Religion, by reading the *H. Scriptures* and other good *Books*, greatly improve themselves, so as to be prepared to receive much greater benefit and advantage by the publick teaching of their *Ministers*.

And in this work of *Instruction* our great care should be to plant those *Principles* of Religion in our *Children* and *Servants* which are most fundamental and necessary, and are like to have the greatest and most lasting influence upon their whole Lives: As right and worthy Apprehensions of God, especially of his

his infinite Goodness, and that *He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity* : And a lively sense also of the great evil and danger of Sin : A firm belief of the Immortality of our Souls, and of the unspeakable and endless Rewards and Punishments of another World. If these *Principles* once take root, they will spread strangely, and probably stick by them and continue with them all their Days.

Whereas if we plant in them *doubtful Doctrines* and *Opinions*, and inculcate upon them the *Notions* of a *Seet*, and the *Jargon* of a *Party*, this will turn to a very pitiful account, and we must expect that our *Harvest* will be answerable to our *Husbandry* : *We have sown the Wind, and shall reap the Whirlwind*. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more particularly and fully in the ensuing *Sermons* concerning

ing the good Education of Children.

And this work of *Instruction* of those that are under our Charge, as it ought not to be neglected at other Times, so is it more peculiarly seasonable on the *Lord's Day*, which ought to be employed by us to Religious purposes, and in the Exercises of Piety and Devotion: Chiefly in the *Publick Worship* and *Service* of God, upon which we should take care that our *Children* and *Servants* should diligently and devoutly attend. Because there God affords the *Means* which he hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of Piety and Goodness and to which he hath promised a more especial Blessing: There they will have the opportunity of joining in the *publick Prayers* of God's Church, and of sharing in the unspeakable benefit and advantage of them: And there they

they will also have the advantage of being instructed by the Ministers of God in the Doctrine of Salvation, and the way to Eternal Life ; and of being powerfully incited to the practice of Piety and Virtue.

There likewise they will be invited to the *Lord's Table*, to participate of the *H. Sacrament* of *Christ's* most blessed *Body and Blood* ; which being the most *Solemn Institution* of the *Christian Religion*, the frequent participation whereof is by our *B. Lord*, in remembrance of his *Dying Love* , enjoined upon all *Christians*, we ought to take a very particular care that those who are under our Charge, so soon as they are capable of it, be duly instructed and prepared for it ; that so as often as Opportunity is offer'd for it, they may be present at this Holy Action, and partake
of

of the inestimable Benefits and Comforts of it.

And when the *Publick Worship* of that Day is over, our Families should be instructed at *Home*, by having the *Scriptures* and other good *Books* read to them; and care likewise should be taken that they do this themselves; this being the chief Opportunity that most of them, especially those that are *Servants*, have of minding the business of Religion, and thinking seriously of another World.

And therefore I cannot but think it of very great consequence to the maintaining and keeping alive of Religion in the World, that this Day be Religiously observed, and spent as much as may be in the exercises of Piety, and in the care of our Souls. For surely every one that hath a true sense of Religion will grant that it is necessary that
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some Time should be solemnly set apart for this purpose, which is of all other our greatest Concernment: And they who neglect this so proper Season and Opportunity, will hardly find any other Time for it: Especially those who are under the Government and Command of others, as *Children* and *Servants*, who are seldom upon any other Day allowed to be so much Masters of their Time, as upon *this Day*.

Thirdly, I add further, as a considerable Part of the Duty of *Parents* and *Masters* of *Families*, if they be desirous to have their *Children* and *Servants* Religious in good earnest and would set them forward in the way to Heaven, that they do not only allow them Time and Opportunity, but that they do also strictly and earnestly charge them to retire themselves every Day,

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but more especially on the *Lord's Day*, Morning and Evening, to pray to God for the Forgiveness of their Sins, and for his mercy and Blessing upon them; and likewise to *Praise* Him for all his Favours and Benefits conferred upon them from Day to Day.

And in order to this, they ought to take care that their *Children* and *Servants* be furnish'd with such short *Forms* of *Prayer* and *Praise*, as are proper and suitable to their capacities and conditions respectively; because there are but very few that know how to set about and perform these *Duties*, especially at first, without some *Helps* of this kind.

Fourthly and lastly, another principal *Part* of this *Duty* consists in giving good *Example* to our *Families*.

Ps. 101. 2. This was *David's* Resolution, *I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way,*
I will

I will walk within my House with a perfect heart. Take great care to be exemplary to thy Family in the best things ; in a constant and devout serving of God, and in a sober and prudent and unblameable Conversation.

One of the best and most effectual ways to make those who are under our Care and Authority good, is to be good our Selves, and by our good Example to shew them the way to be so. Without this our best Instructions will signify but very little, and the main force and efficacy of them will be lost. We undermine the best Instructions we can give, when they are not seconded and confirmed by our own Example, and Practice. The want of this will weaken the Authority of all our good Counsel, and very little Reverence and Obedience will be paid to it. The

Precepts and Admonitions of a very good Man have in them a great power of Persuasion, and are apt strongly to move and to inflame others to *go and do likewise*: But the good Instructions of a bad Man are languid and faint, and of very little force; because they give no heart and encouragement to follow that Counsel which they see he that gives it does not think fit to take himself. But of this likewise I shall have Occasion to speak more fully in the following *Discourses* concerning the *good Education of Children*. And thus much may suffice to have spoken of the *First* thing which I proposed, namely, wherein the Practice of this *Duty* doth consist. I proceed to the *Second*, namely,

II. To consider our *Obligation* to it, both in point of *Duty* and of *Interest*.

First,

First, in Point of Duty. All Authority over others is a *Talent* entrusted with us by God for the benefit and good of others ; and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it and make use of it to that end. We are obliged by all lawful means to provide for the *temporal* welfare of our Family, to feed and cloath their *Bodies* and to give them a comfortable Subsistence here in the World : And surely much more are we obliged to take care of their *Souls*, and to consult their *eternal* Happiness in another Life ; in comparison of which all *temporal* Concernments and Considerations are as nothing.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a *Father* or *Master* to suffer a *Child* to starve for want of the *necessaries* of Life, *food* and *raiment*, and all the World would cry shame upon them for it : But

how much greater Cruelty must it in reason be thought to let an *immortal Soul*, and one for whom *Christ died*, perish for want of knowledge and necessary Instruction for the attaining of *eternal Salvation*?

The *Apostle St. Paul* thinks no words bad enough for those who neglect the *temporal welfare* of their Families, *He that provideth not*, saith he, for his own, especially for those of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel, that is, he does not deserve the Name of a *Christian*, who neglects a Duty to which from the plain Dictates of *Nature* a *Heathen* thinks himself obliged. What then shall be said for them who take no care to provide for the everlasting Happiness, and to prevent the eternal Misery and Ruin of those who are so immediately under their Charge, and so very nearly related to them?

We

We are obliged to procure the Happiness of our *Children* not only by the *Laws* of *Christianity*, but likewise by all the *Natural* bonds of *Duty* and *Affection*. For our *Children* are a part of our Selves, and if they perish by our fault and neglect, it will be a perpetual Wound and Sting to us; their Blood will be upon our heads, and the guilt of it will for ever lye at our doors.

Nay, we are obliged likewise in Justice, and by way of Reparation, to take all possible care of their Happiness; for we have conveyed a sad Inheritance to them, in those corrupt and evil inclinations which they have derived from us: And therefore we should with the greatest care and diligence endeavour to rectify their perverse Natures, and to cure those cursed dispositions to evil which we have

transmitted to them: And since God hath been pleased in so much mercy to provide, by the abundant *Grace* of the *Gospel*, so powerful a *Remedy* for this *hereditary Disease* of our corrupt and degenerate Nature, we should do what in us lies, that they may partake of the Blessing and Benefit of it.

And as to other Members of our Family, whether they be *Servants*, or other *Relations* of whom we have taken the Charge; common *Humanity* will oblige us to be concerned for their Happiness as they are *Men* and of the same Nature with our Selves; and *Charity* likewise, as they are *Christians* and *Baptised* into the same *Faith* and capable of the same *common Salvation*, does yet more strictly oblige us by all means to endeavour that they may be made partakers of it; especially since they are committed
to

to our Care, and for that reason we must expect to be accountable to God for them.

So that our *Obligation* in point of *Duty* is very clear and strong, and if we be remiss and negligent in the discharge of it we can never answer it either to God, or to our own Consciences : Which I hope will awaken us all who are concerned in it to the serious consideration of it, and effectually engage us for the future to the faithful and conscientious performance of it.

Secondly, we are hereto likewise *obliged* in point of *Interest*; because it is really for our service and advantage that those that belong to us should serve and fear God : Religion being the best and surest Foundation of the *Duties* of all *Relations*, and the best Caution and Security for the true discharge and performance of them.

Would

Would we have dutiful and obedient *Children*, diligent and faithful *Servants* ? Nothing will so effectually oblige them to be so, as the Fear of God and the Principles of Religion firmly settled and rooted in them. *Abraham* who by the Testimony of God himself was so eminent an Example in this kind, both of a good *Father* and a good *Master* of his Family, found the good success of his Religious care in the happy effects of it, both upon his Son *Isaac*, and his chief *Servant* and *Steward* of his House, *Eliezer* of *Damascus*.

What an unexampled Instance of the most profound respect and obedience to the Commands of his Father did *Isaac* give, when without the least murmuring or reluctance he submitted to be bound and laid upon the Altar, and to have been slain for a Sacrifice ; if
God

God had not by an Angel, sent on purpose, interposed to prevent it?

What an admirable *Servant* to *Abraham* was the Steward of his House, *Eliezer of Damascus*? How diligent and faithful was he in his *Master's* service? So that he trusted him in his greatest Concernments and with all that he had. And when he employed him in that great Affair of the Marriage of his Son *Isaac*, what pains did he take, what prudence did he use, what fidelity did he shew in the discharge of that great Trust, giving himself no rest till he had accomplish'd the Business he was sent about? God seems purposely to have left these two *Instances* upon Record in *Scripture*, to encourage *Fathers* and *Masters* of Families to a Religious care of their *Children* and *Servants*.

And

And to shew the power of Religion to oblige men to their Duty, I will add but one Instance more. How did the Fear of God secure *Joseph's* fidelity to his Master, in the Case of a very great and violent Temptation? When there was nothing else to restrain him from so lewd and wicked an act and to which he was so powerfully tempted, the consideration of the great trust his Master reposed in him and the sense of his Duty to him, but above all the *Fear of God* preserved him from consenting to so vile and wicked an action, *How can I, says he, do this great wickedness and sin against God?*

So that in prudence, and from a wise consideration of the great benefit and advantage which will thereby redound to us, we ought with the greatest care to instill the Principles of Religion into those
that

that belong to us. For if the Seeds of true Piety be sown in them, we shall reap the fruits of it: And if this be neglected, we shall certainly find the mischief and inconvenience of it. If our *Children* and *Servants* be not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect that they should reverence and regard us? at least we can have no sure hold of them. For nothing but Religion lays an obligation upon Conscience, nor is there any other certain bond of Duty and Obedience and Fidelity: Men will break loose from all other Ties when a fit Occasion and a fair Opportunity doth strongly tempt them. And as Religion is necessary to procure the favour of God and all the comfort and happiness which that brings along with it, so it is necessary likewise to secure the mutual Duties and Offi-

Offices of men to one another. I proceed to the *Third* thing which I proposed, namely,

III. To enquire into the *Causes* of the so common and shameful *Neglect* of this *Duty*, to the exceeding great decay of Piety among us. And this may in part be ascribed to our Civil Confusions and Distractions, but chiefly to our Dissentions and Differences in Religion, which have not only divided and scattered our *Parochial Churches* and *Congregations*, but have entred likewise into our *Families*, and made great disturbances and disorders there.

First, this may in good part be ascribed to our *Civil* Confusions and Distractions, which for the time do lay all *Laws* asleep, and do not only occasion a general Licentiousness and dissoluteness of Manners,

ners, but have usually a proportionable bad influence upon the order and Government of *Families*; by weakening the Authority of those that Govern, and by giving the opportunity of greater License to those that should be *governed*: For when *publick Laws* lose their Authority, it is hard to maintain and keep up the strict *Rules* and *Order* of *Families*, which after great and long Disorder are very hard to be retriev'd and recover'd.

Secondly, this great Neglect and Decay of Religious Order in *Families* is chiefly owing to our Dissentions and Differences in Religion, upon occasion whereof many under the pretence of Conscience have broke loose into a boundless Liberty. So that among the manifold ill Consequences of our *Divisions* in Religion this is none of the least, that the Religious

gious Order of Families hath been in a great measure broken and dissolved. Some will not meet at the same *Prayers* in the *Family*, nor go to the same *Church* and Place of *publick Worship*; and upon that pretence take the liberty to do what they please, and under colour of serving God in a different way according to their Consciences, do either wholly or in great measure neglect the *Worship* of God; nay, it is well if they do not at that *Time* haunt and frequent Places of Debauchery and Lewdness; which they may safely do, being from under the eye of their *Parents* and *Masters*: However, by this means it becomes impossible for the most careful *Masters* of *Families*, to take an account of those under their Charge how they spend their time on the *Lord's Day*, and to train them up in any certain and orderly way of Religion. And

And this methinks is so great and sensible an inconvenience, and hath had such dismal effects in many Families, as ought effectually to convince us of the necessity of endeavouring a greater Union in matters of Religion; and to put us in mind of those happy Days when God was served in one way, and whole Families *went to the House of God in Companies*; and *Fathers and Masters* had their *Children and Servants* continually under their eye, and they were all united in their Worship and Devotion, both in their own Houses and in the House of God; and by this means the Work of Religious Education and Instruction was effectually carried on, and a steady Authority and decent Order was maintained in Families; men were edified and built up in Religion, and *God in all things* was glorified.

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And

And we may assure our selves, that till we are better agreed in matters of Religion, and our unhappy and childish Differences are laid aside ; and till the Publick and unanimous Worship of God do in some measure recover its reputation, the good Order and Government of Families as to the great ends of Religion is never likely to obtain and to have any considerable effect. Which I hope will make all men who heartily love God and Religion, to consider seriously how necessary it is to put an end to these Differences ; that in our private Families, as well as in the publick Assemblies of the Church, we may *with one mind and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Cor. I. 10. I beseech you therefore Brethren, as
St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians, by the
Name*

Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, that is, so far as is necessary to the keeping of the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, and to prevent Divisions and Separations among Christians. I proceed to the Fourth and last thing I proposed, and which remains to be very briefly spoken to, namely,

IV. The very mischievous and fatal Consequences of the neglect of this Duty, both to the Publick, and to our Selves.

First, to the Publick. Families are the first Seminaries of Religion, and if care be not there taken to prepare persons, especially in their tender years, for publick teaching and instruction, it is like to have

but very little effect. The neglect of a due preparation of our Children and Servants at *home*, to make them capable of profiting by what they hear and may learn at *Church*, is like an error in the first Concoction which can hardly ever be corrected afterwards. So that in this first neglect the foundation of an infinite Milchief is laid; because if no care be taken of persons in their younger years, when they are most capable of the impressions of Religion, how can it reasonably be expected that they should come to good afterwards? And if they continue void of the Fear of God, which there hath been no care taken to plant in them, they will almost necessarily be bad in all Relations; undutiful Children, slothful and unfaithful Servants, scandalous Members of the Church, unprofitable to the
Com-

Commonwealth, disobedient to Governours both Ecclesiastical and Civil; and in a word, Burthens of the Earth, and so many Plagues of Human Society: And this Evil, if no Remedy be applied to it, will continually grow worse, and diffuse and spread it self farther in every Age, till Impiety and Wickedness, Infidelity and Profaneness have over-run all, and the World be ripe for its final Ruin: Just as it was before the Destruction of the Old World, when *the wickedness of Man was great upon the Earth, and all Flesh had corrupted their way, then the Flood came and swept them all away.*

Secondly, the Consequences of this Neglect will likewise be very dismal to *our Selves*. We shall first of all others feel the *Inconvenience*, as we had the greatest share in the *Guilt* of it. We can have no man-

ner of security of the Duty and Fidelity of those of our Family to us, if they have no sense of Religion, no fear of God before their eyes. If we have taken no care to instruct them in their Duty to God, it is no wise probable that they will make Conscience of their Duty to us.

So that we shall have the first ill *Consequences* of their Miscarriage, besides the *Shame* and *Sorrow* of it : And not only so, but all the evil they commit ever after, will be in a great measure chargeable upon us, and will be put upon our score in the Judgment of the Great Day. It ought to make us tremble to think with what bitterness and Rage our Children and Servants will then fly in our faces, for having been the Cause of their eternal Ruin, for want of due care on our part to prevent it. In *that Day*,
next

next to *God* and our own *Consciences*, our most terrible *Accusers* will be those of our own *House*, nay those that came out of our own *Bowels*, and were not only Part of our *Family*, but even of our *Selves*. But this also I shall have a proper Occasion to prosecute more fully in the following *Discourses* concerning the *Education of Children*, to which I refer it.

Upon all these Considerations and many more that might be urged upon us, we should take up the pious Resolution of *Joshua* here in the Text, that *We and OUR HOUSES* will serve the Lord: And that, through God's Grace, we will do all that in us lies by our future Care and Diligence to repair our former neglects in this kind.

I shall only add this one Consideration more to all that I have al-

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ready mentioned: If *Children* were carefully educated, and *Families* regularly and Religiously ordered, what a happy and delightful Place, what a Paradise would this World be, in comparison of what now it is?

I beseech you therefore *Brethren*, that these things which I have with so much plainness and faithfulness laid before you, may sink into your hearts, before it be too late, and whilst the thing may be remedied; that you may not for ever lament this neglect and repent of it, when the thing will be past Remedy and there will be no place for Repentance. *But I hope better things of you, Brethren, and things that accompany Salvation, though I thus speak.*

S E R M O N I.

O F T H E

Education of Children.



S E R M O N I.
O F T H E
Education of Children.

P R O V. XXII. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart
from it.*

I Have on purpose chosen this
Text for the subject of a Prepa-
ratory Discourse in order to the
reviving of that so shamefully ne-
glected and yet most useful and ne-
cessary Duty of *Catechising* children
and young persons: But I shall
extend it to the consideration of
the *Education of Children* in gene-
ral,

ral, as a matter of the greatest consequence both to Religion and the Publick welfare.

For we who are the Ministers of God ought not only to instruct those who are committed to our charge in the common Duties of Christianity, such as belong to all Christians, but likewise in all the particular Duties which the several Relations in which they stand to one another do respectively require and call for from them.

And amongst all these I know none that is of greater concernment to Religion and to the good Order of the World than the careful Education of Children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires a more prudent and diligent and constant application of our best care and endeavour.

It

It is a known Saying of *Me-
lancthon* that there are three things
which are extremely difficult, *par-
turire, docere, regere*; to bear and
bring forth Children, to instruct and
bring them up to be Men, and to govern
them when they arrive at *Mans estate*.
The instruction and good Education of
Children is none of the least difficult
of these. For to do it to the best
advantage does not only require
great sagacity to discern their par-
ticular disposition and temper, but
great discretion to deal with them
and manage them, and likewise
continual care and diligent atten-
dance to form them by degrees to
Religion and Virtue.

It requires great wisdom and in-
dustry to advance a considerable
Estate, much art and contrivance
and pains to raise a great and re-
gular Building: But the greatest
and noblest Work in the World,
and

and an effect of the greatest prudence and care is to rear and build up a Man, and to form and fashion him to Piety, and Justice, and Temperance, and all kind of honest and worthy actions. Now the Foundations of this great Work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of Children, that it may rise and grow up with them; according to the advice of the *Wise-man* here in the *Text*, *Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

In which words are contained these *two* things.

First, The Duty of Parents and Instructors of Children, *Train up a Child*, &c. By *Childhood* here I understand the Age of Persons from their Birth, but more especially from their first capacity of Instruction till they arrive at the State and Age which next succeeds *Childhood*,

hood, and which we call Youth; and which is the proper Season for *Confirmation*. For when Children have been well *Catechised* and instructed in Religion, then is the fittest Time for them to take upon themselves and in their own Persons to confirm that *solemn Vow* which by their *Sureties* they made at their *Baptism*.

Train up a Child in the way he should go, that is, in the course of Life that he ought to lead; instruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole Duty to God and Men, which he ought to observe and perform all the days of his Life.

Secondly, here is the consequent fruit and benefit of good Education: *And when he is old he will not depart from it*. This we are to understand according to the moral probability of things: Not as if this
happy

happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good Education of a Child, but that this very frequently is, and may probably be presumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent Education. *Solomon* means that from the very nature of the thing this is the most hopeful and likely way to train up a Child to be a good Man. For as *Aristotle* truly observes, *Moral Sayings* and *Proverbial Speeches* are to be understood only ἐπὶ τὸ πλὸν, that is, to be usually and *for the most part* true. And though there may be several exceptions made, and instances given to the contrary, yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them: But if in frequent and common experience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, because it is all that was intended by them.

And

And of this nature is this *Aphorism* or *Proverb* of *Solomon* in the *Text* ; and so likewise are most of the *wise Sayings* of this *Book* of the *Proverbs* , as also of *Ecclesiastes* : And we do greatly mistake the design and meaning of them whenever we go about to exact them to a more strict and rigorous truth, and shall upon due consideration find it impossible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the *Text* may be fully comprised in the following *Proposition*.

That the careful, and prudent, and religious Education of Children hath for the most part a very good influence upon the whole course of their lives.

In the handling of this Argument I design, by God's assistance, to reduce my Discourse to these *Five Heads*.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good Education of Children doth consist, and severally consider the principal Parts of it.

II. I shall give some more particular Directions for the management of this work in such a way as may be most effectual for its end.

III. I shall take notice of some of the common and more remarkable miscarriages in the performance of this Duty.

IV. I shall endeavour to make out the truth of this *Proposition*, by shewing how the good Education of Children comes to be of so great advantage and to have so powerful and lasting an influence upon their whole Lives.

V. and *Lastly*; I shall, by the most powerful Arguments I can offer, endeavour to stir up and persuade

suade those whose Duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good Education of Children doth consist, and severally consider the principal Parts of it. And under this Head I shall comprehend promiscuously the Duty of Parents and, in case of their death, of Guardians; and of God-fathers and God-mothers; though this for the most part signifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them, because the Children for whom they are Sureties are seldom under their power: And the Duty likewise of those who are the Teachers and Instructors of them: And the Duty also of Masters of Families towards Servants in their childhood and younger years: And

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last.

I.

lastly the Duty of *Ministers*, under whose *Parochial* care and inspection Children are as members of the Families committed to their charge : I say , under this *Head* I shall comprehend the Duties of all these respectively, according to the several obligations which lie upon each of them in their several relations to them. And I shall reduce them to these *eight* particulars, as the principal parts wherein the Education of Children doth consist.

First, in the tender and careful nursing of them.

Secondly, in bringing them to be baptised and admitted Members of *Christ's Church*, at the times appointed or accustomed in the National Church of which the Parents are Members.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, in a due care to inform and instruct them in the whole compass of their Duty to *God* and to their *Neighbour*.

Fourthly, and more especially in a prudent and diligent care to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Virtue.

Fifthly, in giving them good Example.

Sixthly, in wise restraints from that which is Evil, by seasonable Reproof and Correction.

Seventhly, in bringing them to be publickly Catechised by the Minister in order to Confirmation.

Eighthly, in bringing them to the Bishop to be solemnly Confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the Vow which by their Sureties they enter'd into at their Baptism.

I. *In the tender and careful nursing of Children.* I mention this first, because it is the first and most nat-

tural Duty incumbent upon Parents towards their Children : And this is particularly the Duty of Mothers. This affection and tenderness Nature, which is our surest guide and director, hath implanted in all living Creatures towards their young ones : And there cannot be a greater reproach to Creatures that are endued with Reason, than to neglect a Duty to which Nature directs even the Brute Creatures by a blind and unthinking Instinct. So that it is such a Duty as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to Nature, and from which nothing can excuse but *disability, or sickness, or the evident danger of the Mother, or the interposition of the Father's Authority, or some very extraordinary and publick necessity.*

This I foresee will seem a very *hard Saying* to nice and delicate
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Mothers, who prefer their own ease and pleasure to the fruit of their own Bodies : But whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think my self obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be so faithful as to tell them that this is a natural Duty ; and because it is so, of a more necessary and indispensable obligation than any *positive* Precept of *reveal'd* Religion ; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying Sins of this Age and Nation ; and which as much as any Sin whatsoever is evidently a punishment to it self in the palpable ill effects and consequences of it : Which I shall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to represent ; that, if it be possible, we may in this first Point of Education, so fundamental and necessary to the happiness both of Parents and Children, and

consequently to the Publick Good of Human Society, be brought to comply with the unerring Instinct of Nature, and with the plain Dictate of the common Reason of Mankind, and the general practice of all Ages and Nations.

First, the neglect of this Duty is a sort of exposing of Children; especially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always exposeth them to manifest inconvenience, and sometimes to great danger; even to that degree as in the consequence of it is but little better than the laying a Child in the Streets, and leaving it to the care and compassion of a Parish. There are *two* very visible inconveniencies which do commonly attend it.

1st. Strange Milk, which is often very disagreeable to the Child,

Child, and with which the Child to be sure sucks in the natural infirmities of the Nurse, together with a great deal of her natural inclinations and irregular passions, which many times stick by the Child for a long time after: And which is worse than all this, it sometimes happens that some secret Disease of the Nurse is conveyed to the Child.

2dly. A shameful and dangerous neglect of the Child, especially by such Nurses as make a Trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great City: Who after they have made their first and main advantage of the Child by the excessive, not to say extravagant *vails*, which usually here in *England*, above all places in the World, are given at *Christenings*: And then by the strait allowances which are commonly made

made afterwards for the nursing and keeping of the Child, are often tempted, not to say worse, to a great neglect of the Child; which, if it happen to dye for want of due care, sets the Nurse at liberty to make a new advantage by taking another Child.

Nor can it well be otherwise expected than that a Nurse, who by this course is first made to be unnatural to her own Child, should have no great care and tenderness for a Child which is not her own.

I have heard a very sad Observation made by those who have had the opportunity to know it, that in several of the *Towns* and *Villages* about *London*, where this Trade of nursing Children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of these Children lives out the year: And this surely is a danger which natural

ral affection as well as duty does oblige Parents to take all possible care to prevent.

Secondly, this course doth most certainly tend very much to the estranging and weakening of natural affection on both sides ; I mean both on the part of the Mother and of the Child. The pains of nursing as well as of bearing Children doth insensibly create a strange tenderness of affection and care in the Mother. *Can a woman, Isa. 49. 15. says God, forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Can a Woman ? that is, a Mother, not a Nurse ; for the sucking child is said to be the son of her womb. God speaks of this as a thing next to impossible.*

And this likewise is a great endearment of the Mother to the Child : Which endearment, when the Child is put out, is transferr'd
from

from the Mother to the Nurse, and many times continues to be so for a great many years after ; yea, and often to that degree as if the Nurse were the true Mother, and the true Mother a mere stranger. So that by this means natural affection must be extremely weaken'd ; which is great pity, because when it is kept up in its full strength it often proves one of the best securities of the Duty of a Child.

But because this severe Doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I must take the more care to guard it against the *Objections* which will be made to it. Those from *natural disability*, or *sickness* ; from *evident and apparent danger* of the *Mother*, or from the *interposition* of the *Father's Authority*, or from *plain necessity* ; or if there be any other that have an equal

equal Reason with these, I have prevented already by allowing them to be just and reasonable *exceptions* from the general *Rule*, when they are real, and not made *Pretences* to shake off our *Duty*.

But there are besides these, *two* Objections which indeed are real, but yet seem to have too great a weight with those who would fain decline this *Duty*, and are by no means sufficient to excuse Mothers, no not those of the highest Rank and Quality, from the natural obligation of it. And they are these. The *manifest trouble*, and the *manifold restraint* which the careful discharge of this *Duty* does unavoidably bring upon those who submit themselves to it.

1st. For the *trouble* of it, I have only this to say, and I think that no more need to be said about it ; that no body is discharged from
any

any Duty by reason of the trouble which necessarily attends it, and is inseparable from it ; since God who made it a Duty foresaw the trouble of it when he made it so.

2dly. As to the *manifest* restraint which it lays upon Mothers ; this will best be answer'd by considering of what nature these *restraints* are. And they are chiefly in these and the like instances. This Duty restrains Mothers from spending their Morning and their Money in curious and costly Dressing ; from mispending the rest of the Day in formal and for the most part impertinent Visits, and in seeing and hearing Plays, many of which are neither fit to be seen or heard by modest Persons and those who pretend to Religion and Virtue ; as I hope all Christians do, especially Persons of higher Rank and Quality : And it restrains them
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likewise from trifling away a great part of the Night in Gaming, and in Revelling till past Midnight, I am loth to say how much.

These are those terrible *restraints* which this natural Duty, of Mothers nursing their Children, lays upon them. Now I cannot but think all these to be very happy *restraints* : Happy surely for the Child ; and in many respects happy for the *Father*, and for the whole *Family*, which by this means will be kept in much better order : But happiest of all for the Mother, who does herein not only discharge a great and necessary Duty, but is hereby also hinder'd from running into many great Faults, which before they will be forgiven must cost her a deep Contrition, and a very bitter Repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unusual Argument,
than

than will please the present Age : But I hope Posterity will be so wise as to consider it and lay it to heart. For I am greatly afraid that the World will never be much better till this great Fault be mended. I proceed to the next *Particular* wherein the good Education of Children doth consist, namely

II. *In bringing them to be Baptized and admitted Members of Christ's Church*, at the times appointed or accustomed in the National Church of which the Parents are Members. I mean, to bring them to the Church to be there publicly initiated, and solemnly admitted by *Baptism*. And this the Rules of the Church of *England* do strictly enjoin, unless the Child be in danger of death ; and in that case only it is allow'd to administer Baptism privately, and in a summary way

way without performing the whole *Office*. But then if the Child live, it is ordered that it shall be brought to the Church, where the remainder of the *Office* is to be solemnly perform'd.

I know that of late years, since our unhappy *Confusions*, this *Sacrament* hath very frequently been administred in private: And *Ministers* have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater mischief of *Separation*, necessitated to comply with the obstinacy of the greater and more powerful of their *Parishioners*; who for their ease, or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous *Christening*, will either have their Children baptised at home by their *Minister*; or if he refuse, will get some other *Minister* to do it; which is very irregular.

Now I would intreat such persons calmly to consider how con-

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trary

trary to Reason, and to the plain design of the institution of this *Sacrament*, this perverse custom, and their obstinate resolution in it, is. For is there any *Civil Society* or *Corporation* into which persons are admitted without some kind of *Solemnity*? And is the *Privilege* of being admitted *Members* of the *Christian Church*, and *Heirs* of the great and glorious *Promises* and *Blessings* of the *New Covenant* of the *Gospel* less considerable and fit to be conferr'd with less *Solemnity*? I speak to *Christians*, and they who are so in good earnest will, without my using more words about it, consider what I say in this Particular.

III. Another and very necessary Part of the good Education of Children is, *by degrees to inform and carefully to instruct them in the whole compass of their Duty to God, their*
Neigh.

Neighbour, and Themselves: That so they may be taught how to behave themselves in all the steps of their Life, from their first capacity of Reason till they arrive at the more perfect use and exercise of that Faculty; when, if at first they be well instructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themselves afterwards.

This Duty God does expressly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar People, the People of Israel, speaking of the Laws which he had given them: Thou shalt, says He, teach them diligently unto thy Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And this God long before promised that Abraham, the Father of the faithful, would do. I know Abraham, says He, that he will com-

Deut. 6. 7.

Gen. 18. 19.

mand his Children and his Household after him to keep the way of the Lord.

This Work ought to be begun very early, upon the first budding and appearance of Reason and Understanding in Children. So the Prophet directs; *Whom shall he teach knowledge? Whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts: For precept must be upon precept, &c.*

Isa. 28. 9,
10.

To this end we must, by such degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with God and themselves. And in the first place we must inform them, that there is such a Being as God, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things: And then, that we are all his Creatures and the work of his hands, that it is *He* that hath made us, and not we ourselves: That He continually preserves

serves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy ; and therefore we ought to ask every thing of Him by Prayer, because this is an acknowledgment of our dependance upon Him ; and to return *thanks* to Him for all that we have and hope for, because this is a just and easy Tribute, and all that we can render to Him for his numberless favours and benefits.

And after this, they are to be instructed more particularly in their Duty to *God* and *Men*, as I shall shew more fully afterwards. And because *Fear* and *Hope* are the two *Passions* which do chiefly sway and govern Human Nature, and the main Springs and Principles of action ; therefore Children are to be carefully inform'd that there is a Life after Death, wherein men shall receive from God a mighty and eternal Reward, or a terrible

and endless Punishment, according as they have done or neglected their Duty in this Life: That God will love and reward those who do his will and keep his commandments, but will execute a dreadful punishment upon the workers of iniquity and the wilful transgressors of his Laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made sensible of the great degeneracy and corruption of Human Nature, derived to us by the *Fall* and wilful transgression of our *first Parents*; and of the way of our *Recovery* out of this miserable state by *Jesus Christ*; whom God hath sent in our Nature to purchase and accomplish the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind, from the Captivity of Sin and *Satan*, and from the Damnation of Hell.

IV. The

IV. The good Education of Children consists not only in informing their Minds in the knowledge of God and their Duty, but more especially in endeavouring with the greatest care and prudence to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Virtue. And this must be done by training them up to the exercise of the following Graces and Virtues.

First, to Obedience and Modesty; to Diligence and Sincerity; and to Tendernefs and Pity, as the general dispositions to Religion and Virtue.

Secondly, to the good government of their Passions, and of their Tongue; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate Lying as a base and vile quality; these being as it were the foundations of Religion and Virtue.

Thirdly, to Piety and Devotion towards God; to Sobriety and Chastity with regard to themselves; and

to *Justice* and *Charity* towards all men; as the principal and essential *Parts* of *Religion* and *Virtue*.

First, as the general *dispositions* to *Religion* and *Virtue*, we must train them up,

1st. To *Obedience*. Parents must take great care to maintain their *Authority* over their *Children*; otherwise they will neither regard their *Commands*, nor hearken to and follow their *Instructions*. If they once get head and grow *stubborn* and *disobedient*, there is very little hope left of doing any great good upon them.

2^{dly}. To *Modesty*, which is a fear of *Shame* and *Disgrace*. This *disposition*, which is proper to *Children*, is a marvellous advantage to all good purposes. They are *modest*, says *Aristotle*, *who are afraid to offend*, and *they are afraid to offend who are most apt to do it*; as *Children* are,
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because they are very much under the power of their *Passions*, without a proportionable strength of *Reason* to govern them and keep them under.

Now *Modesty* is not properly a *Virtue*, but it is a very good Sign of a tractable and towardly *Disposition*, and a great preservative and security against *Sin* and *Vice*: And those Children, who are much under the restraint of *Modesty*, we look upon as most hopeful and likely to prove good: Whereas *Immodesty* is a vicious temper broke loose and got free from all restraint: So that there is nothing left to keep an *impudent* person from *Sin*, when fear of *Shame* is gone: For *Sin* will soon take possession of that person whom *Shame* hath left. He that is once become shameless hath prostituted himself. Therefore preserve this
Dispo-

Disposition in Children as much as is possible, as one of the best means to preserve their innocence, and to bring them to goodness.

3dly. to diligence, *sine quâ vir magnus nunquam extitit, without which,* says one, *there never was any great and excellent person.* When the *Roman Historians* describe an extraordinary man, this always enters into his Character as an essential part of it, that he was *incredibili industria, diligentia singulari, of incredible industry, of singular diligence ;* or something to that purpose. And indeed a Person can neither be excellently good, nor extremely bad, without this quality. The Devil himself could not be so bad and mischievous as he is, if he were not so stirring and restless a Spirit, and did not compass the Earth and go to and fro seeking whom he might devour.

This

This is part of the Character of *Sylla*, and *Marius*, and *Catiline*, those great Disturbers of the Roman State; as well as of *Cesar* and *Pompey*, who were much greater and better men, but yet gave trouble enough to their Countrey, and at last dissolved the Roman Commonwealth by their Ambition and Contention for Superiority: This, I say, enters into all their Characters, that they were of a vigorous and indefatigable spirit. So that *Diligence* in it self is neither a *Virtue* nor a *Vice*, but may be applied either way, to good or bad purposes; and yet where all other requisites do concur it is a very proper *Instrument* and *Disposition* for *Virtue*.

Therefore train up Children to *diligence*, if ever you desire they should excel in any kind. *The diligent hand, saith Solomon, maketh rich:* Prov. 10.4.
Rich

Prov. 22.
29. *Rich in estate, Rich in knowledge. Seest thou a man diligent in his business, as the same Wise man observes, he shall stand before Princes, he shall not stand before mean, or obscure men.*

Prov. 12.
24. *And again, The hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the slothful shall be under Tribute. Diligence puts almost every thing into our power, and will in time make Children capable of the best and greatest things.*

Whereas *Idleness* is the bane and ruin of Children; it is the unbending of their Spirits, the *Rust* of their Faculties, and as it were the laying of their Minds *fallow*; not as Husbandmen do their Lands that they may get new heart and strength, but to impair and lose that which they have. Children that are bred up in laziness are almost necessarily bad, because they cannot take the pains to be good; and they cannot take pains, because they

they have never been inured and accustomed to it ; which makes their Spirits *restive*, and when you have occasion to quicken them and spur them up to business they will stand stock still.

Therefore never let your Children be without a *Calling*, or without some useful, or at least innocent employment that will take them up ; that they may not be put upon a kind of necessity of being *vicious* for want of something better to do. The *Devil* tempts the active and vigorous into his service, knowing what fit and proper instruments they are to do his drudgery : But the slothful and idle, no body having hired them and set them on work, lie in his way, and he stumbles upon them as *he goes about* ; and they do as it were offer themselves to his service, and having nothing to do
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they even tempt the *Devil* himself to tempt *them*, and to take them in his way.

4thly. to *sincerity*; which is not so properly a single Virtue, as the life and soul of all other Graces and Virtues; and without which, what shew of goodness soever a man may make, he is unsound and rotten at the heart. Cherish therefore this disposition in Children, as that which when they come to be men will be the great security and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and Men.

5thly. to *tenderness* and *pity*: Which, when they come to engage in business and to have dealings in the World, will be a good bar against Injustice and Oppression; and will be continually prompting us to Charity, and will fetch powerful Arguments for it from our own bowels. To

To preserve this goodness and tenderness of nature, this so very human and useful affection, keep Children, as much as is possible, out of the way of *bloody Sights* and *Spe&ctacles* of cruelty; and discountenance in them all cruel and barbarous usage of Creatures under their power: do not allow them to torture and kill them for their sport and pleasure; because this will insensibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them less apt to compassionate the wants of the poor and the sufferings and afflictions of the miserable.

Secondly, as the main *Foundations* of Religion and Vertue, Children must be carefully train'd up to the Government of their *Passions*, and of their *Tongues*; and particularly to *speak truth*, and to hate *lying* as a base and vile quality.

1st. to

1st. to the good Government of their *Passions*. It is the disorder of these, more especially of *Desire*, and *Fear*, and *Anger*, which betrays us to many evils. *Anger* prompts men to *contention* and *murther*: Inordinate *Desire* to *covetousness* and *fraud* and *oppression*: And *Fear* many times awes men into Sin, and deters them from their Duty.

Now if these *Passions* be cherish'd, or even but let alone in Children, they will in a short time grow headstrong and unruly, and when they come to be men will corrupt the judgment, and turn good nature into humour, and the understanding into prejudice and wilfulness: But if they be carefully observed and prudently restrained, they may by degrees be managed and brought under government; and the inordinacy of them

them being prun'd away, they may prove excellent Instruments of Virtue.

Therefore be careful to discountenance in Children any thing that looks like Rage and furious Anger, and to shew them the unreasonableness and deformity of it. Check their longing Desires after things pleasant, and use them to frequent disappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratify them they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to submit to the more prudent choice of their Parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you see them at any time apt out of *Fear* to neglect their Duty, or to fall into any Sin, or to be tempted by telling a Lye

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to

to commit one fault to hide and excuse another, which Children are very apt to do: The best Remedy of this Evil will be to plant a greater Fear against a less, and to tell them *what* and *whom* they should chiefly fear; *not him who can hurt and kill the Body, but Him who after He hath kill'd can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell.*

The neglect of Children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their *Passions*, is the true cause why many that have proved sincere *Christians* when they came to be Men, have yet been very imperfect in their conversation, and their Lives have been full of inequalities and breaches, which have not only been matter of great trouble and disquiet to themselves, but of great scandal to Religion; when their light which should shine before

fore men is so often darken'd and obscured by these frequent and visible infirmities.

2dly. To the government of their Tongues. To this end teach Children Silence, especially in the presence of their *Betters*: And as soon as they are capable of such a Lesson, let them be taught not to speak but upon *consideration*, both of *what* they say, and before *whom*. And above all, inculcate upon them that most necessary Duty and Vertue of *speaking truth*, as one of the best and strongest bands of Human Society and Commerce: And possess them with the baseness and vileness of telling a Lye; for if it be so great a provocation to give a man the Lye, then surely to be guilty of that Fault must be a mighty Reproach.

They who write of *Japan* tell us that those People, though mere

Heathens, take such an effectual course in the Education of their Children as to render a *Lye* and *breach of Faith* above all things odious to them : Insomuch that it is a very rare thing for any Person among them to be taken in a *Lye*, or found guilty of *breach of Faith*. And cannot the Rules of *Christianity* be render'd as effectual to restrain men from these Faults which are scandalous even to *Nature*, and much more so to the *Christian Religion* ?

To the Government of the *Tongue* does likewise belong the restraining of Children from *lewd* and *obscene* words, from *vain* and *profane* talk ; and especially from horrid *Oaths* and *Imprecations* : From all which they are easily kept at first, but if they are once accusom'd to them it will be found no such easy matter for them to get quit

quit of these evil Habits. It will require great attention and watchfulness over themselves, to keep *Oaths* out of their common discourse; but if they be heated and in passion they throw out *Oaths* and *Curses* as naturally as men that are highly provoked fling stones or any thing that comes next to hand at one another: So dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in Children to grow up into a *Habit*.

Thirdly, As the principal and essential Parts of Religion and Virtue, let Children be carefully bred up,

1st. To Sobriety and Temperance in regard to themselves; under which I comprehend likewise Purity and Chastity. The government of the sensual Appetite as to all kind of Bodily pleasures is not only a great part of Religion, but an ex-

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cellent instrument of it, and a necessary foundation of Piety and Justice. For he that cannot govern himself is not like to discharge his Duty either to God or Men. And therefore St. Paul puts Sobriety first, as a primary and principal Virtue in which men are instructed by the Christian Religion, and which must be laid as the foundation both of Piety towards God, and of Righteousness to Men. The Grace of God, for so he calls the Gospel, that brings Salvation unto all men, hath appeared; teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world. It first teacheth us to live soberly; and unless we train up Children to this Virtue we must never expect that they will either live righteously or godly in this present World.

Espe-

Especially, Children must be bred up to great *Sobriety* and *Temperance* in their *Diet*, which will re-trench the fewel of other inordinate Appetites. It is a good Saying I have met with somewhere, *Magna pars virtutis est bene moratus venter*, a well manner'd and well govern'd Appetite, in matter of meats and drinks, is a great part of *Virtue*. I do not mean, that Children should be brought up according to the Rules of a *Lessian* Diet, which sets an equal stint to all Stomachs, and is as senseless a thing as a *Law* would be which should enjoin that *Shoes* for all Mankind should be made upon one and the same *Last*.

2dly. To a serious and unaffected *Piety* and *Devotion* towards *God*, still and quiet, real and substantial, without much shew and noise; and as free, as may be, from all tricks of *Superstition*, or

freaks of Enthusiasm; which, if *Parents* and *Teachers* be not very prudent, will almost unavoidably insinuate themselves into the Religion of Children; and when they are grown up will make them appear, to wise and sober Persons, phantastical and conceited; and render them very apt to impose their own foolish Superstitions and wild Conceits upon others, who understand Religion much better than themselves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things, to serve him in private, and to attend constantly upon his publick Worship and to keep their minds intent upon the several parts of it without wandering and distraction: To *Pray* to God as the Fountain of all Grace and the *giver of every good and perfect gift*: And to acknowledge Him and to render *Thanks*
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to Him, as our most gracious and constant Benefactor, and the great Patron and Preserver of our Lives: To be careful to do what He commands, and to avoid what He hath forbidden: To be always under a lively sense and apprehension of his pure and allseeing Eye, which beholds us in secret: And to do every thing in obedience to the Authority of that Great *Lawgiver*, who is able to save and to destroy; and with an awful regard to the strict and impartial *Judgment* of the Great Day.

3dly. To *Justice* and *honesty*: To defraud and oppress no man; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their Promises and Contracts: And endeavour to imprint upon their minds the Equity of that *Great Rule*, which is so natural, and so easy, that even Children are capable of it; I mean
that

that *Rule* which our *B. Saviour* tells us *is the Law and the Prophets*, namely, that we should do to others as we would have others do to us if we were in their Case and Circumstances, and they in ours.

You that are *Parents* and have to do in the World, ought to be just and equal in all your dealings: In the first place for the sake of your own Souls, and next for the sake of your Children: Not only that you may entail no Curse upon the Estate you leave them, but likewise that you may teach them no Injustice by the Example you set before them; which in this particular they will be as apt to imitate as in any one thing, because of the present worldly advantage which it seems to bring, and because *Justice* is in truth a manly Virtue and least understood by

by Children; and therefore *Injustice* is a Vice which they will soonest practise and with the least reluctance, because they have the least knowledg of it in many particular Cases: And because they have so little sense of this great Virtue, they should not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and sport, even when they play for little or nothing: For if they practise it in that Case, and be unjust in a little, they will be much more tempted to be so when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember that *Xenophon* in his *Institution of Cyrus*, which he designed for the *Idea* of a well educated Prince, tells us this little but very instructive Story concerning young *Cyrus*: That his Governor, the better to make him to understand the nature of *Justice*, puts this Case to him: You see there,
says

says he to *Cyrus*, two Boys playing, of different stature ; the lesser of them hath a very long Coat, and the bigger a very short one : Now, says he, if you were a Judge how would you dispose of these two Garments ? *Cyrus* immediately , and with very good reason as he thought, passeth this sudden Sentence, That the taller Boy should have the longer Garment , and he that was of lower stature the shorter, because this certainly was fittest for them both : Upon which his Governor sharply rebukes him to this purpose ; telling him, that if he were to make two Coats for them he said well ; but he did not put this Case to him as a *Tailor* but as a *Judge* , and as such he had given a very wrong Sentence : For a *Judge*, says he, ought not to consider what is *most fit* but what is *just* ; not who could make the *best*
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use of a thing but who hath the most right to it.

This I bring, partly to shew in what familiar ways the Principles of Virtue may be instill'd into Children; but chiefly to prove that *Justice* is a manly Virtue, and that there is nothing wherein Children may be more easily mis-led, than in matter of *Right* and *Wrong*: Therefore Children should be taught the general Principles and Rules of *Justice* and *Righteousness*, because if we would teach them to do *Justice* we must teach them to know what *Justice* is. For many are unjust merely out of Ignorance and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

4thly. To *Charity*; I mean chiefly to the poor and destitute; because this, as it is an essential so is it a most substantial Part of Religion. Now to encourage this Disposition

position in Children we must not only give them the Example of it, but must frequently inculcate upon them such Passages of Scripture as these, That *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction*: That *as we sow in this kind, so we shall reap*: That *he shall have judgment without mercy who hath shewed no mercy*: That at the Judgment of the Great Day we shall in a very particular manner be call'd to an account for the practice or omission of this Duty, and shall then be absolved or condemned according as we have exercised or neglected this great Virtue of the Christian Religion.

S E R M O N II.

O F T H E

E d u c a t i o n o f C h i l d r e n.

S E R M O N II.

O F T H E

Education of Children.

P R O V. XXII. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart
from it.*

V. **T**HE good Education of
Children consists in giving
them good Example. This course
David took in his Family, as ap-
pears by that solemn Resolution
of his, *I will behave my self wisely* Psal. 101.2;
*in a perfect way, I will walk within my
house with a perfect heart. Let Pa-
rents and Masters of Families give*
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good Example to their Children and Servants, in a constant serving of God in their Families, which will nourish Religion in those that are under their care : And let them also be Exemplary in a sober and holy Conversation before those that belong to them.

And let not your Children, as far as is possible, have any bad Examples to converse with, either among your Servants, or their own Companions ; *lest by walking with them they learn their way and get a blot to their Souls.* There is a contagion in Example, and nothing doth more slyly insinuate it self and gain upon us than a living and familiar Patern ; therefore, as much as in you lies, let Children always have good Examples before them.

Especially , let Parents themselves be exemplary to them in the best things, because their Example

ample is of all other the most powerful and carries greatest Authority with it. And without this, Instruction will signify very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be lost. We shall find it very hard to persuade our Children to do that which they see we do not practise our selves. For even Children have so much sense and sagacity as to understand that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a man doth truly and inwardly believe. Example is the most lively way of teaching, and because Children are much given to imitation, it is likewise a very delightful way of instruction, and that of which Children are most capable ; both because it is best understood , and is apt to make the deepest impression upon them.

So that Parents, above all others, have one Argument to be Religious and good themselves, for the sake of their Children. If you desire to have them good, the best way to make them so is to give them the Example of it in being good your selves. For this reason Parents should take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your Children will follow you in what you do, therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil Example of Parents is both a temptation and encouragement to Children to Sin, because it is a kind of Authority for what they do, and looks like a justification of their wickedness.

With what reason canst thou expect that thy Children should follow thy good Instructions, when thou thy self givest them
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an ill Example ? Thou dost but as it were becken to them with thy head and shew them the way to Heaven by thy good Counsel, but thou takest them by the hand and leadeest them in the way to Hell by thy contrary Example. When ever you swear, or tell a lye, or are passionate and furious, or come drunk into your Family, you weaken the Authority of your Commands, and lose all reverence and obedience to them by contradicting your own Precepts.

The Precepts of a good man are apt to raise and inflame others to the imitation of them, but when they come from one who is faulty and vicious in that kind himself they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exercise of those Virtues which we plainly see they do not practise themselves. It is

the *Apostle's* Argument, *Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thy self?* Thou that teachest thy Children to speak truth, dost thou tell a lye? Thou that sayest they must not swear, dost thou profane the Name of God by customary Oaths and Curses? Thou art unfit to be a guide of the blind, a light to them that are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of Babes; because thou thy self hast only a form of Knowledge and of truth in the Law, but art destitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good Example to your Children you defeat your own counsels and undermine the best instructions you can give them; and they will all be spilt like water upon the barren Sands, they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

VI. Good

VI. Good Education consists in wise and early Restraints from that which is evil, by seasonable Reproof and Correction. And this also is one way of Instruction: So Solomon Prov.29.15. tells us, *The Rod and Reproof giveth wisdom*: And though both these do suppose a Fault that is past, yet the great end of them is to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore whatever will probably be effectual for future Caution and Amendment ought to be sufficient in this kind, because the End is always to give measure to the Means: And where a mild and gentle Rebuke will do the business Reproof may stop there without proceeding further: Or when that will not do, if a sharp word and a severe admonition will be effectual, the Rod may be spared.

Provided always, that our *Lenity* give no encouragement to Sin, and be so managed that Children may perceive that you are in good earnest and resolved that if they will not reform they shall certainly be punish'd. And provided likewise, that your *Lenity* bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the Fault. We must not use mildness in the case of a wilful and heinous Sin, especially if it be exemplary and of publick influence. To rebuke gently upon such an Occasion is rather to countenance the Fault, and seems to argue that we are not sensible enough of the Enormity of it, and that we have not a due dislike and detestation for it: Such cold Reproofs as those which old *Eli* gave his Sons, *Why do you such things? For I hear of your evil dealing by all this People, that is, their carriage* was

's Sam. 2.
#3, 24.

was such as gave publick Scandal :
*Nay, my Sons ; for it is not a good
Report that I hear, you make the
Lord's People to transgress.*

Such a cold Reproof as this,
where the Crime was so great and
notorious, was a kind of allowance
of it, and a partaking with them
in their Sin ; and so God inter-
prets it , and therefore calls it a Chap.2.19.
*kicking at his Sacrifice, and a despising
of his Offering : And he threatens
Eli with most terrible Judgments
upon this very account, because his
Sons made themselves vile, and he re-
strained them not.*

So that our Severity must be
proportioned to the Crime. Where
the Fault is great, there greater Se-
verity must be used ; so much at
least as may be an effectual Re-
straint for the future. Here was
Eli's miscarriage, that in the case
of so great a Fault as his Sons were
guilty

guilty of his proceeding was neither proportioned to the Crime, nor to the End of Reproof and Correction, which is Amendment for the future: But he used such a mildness in his Reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage than restrain them in their vile courses: For so the *Text* says, that *his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

There are indeed some Dispositions so very tender and tractable, that a gentle Reproof will suffice. But most Children are of that temper that Correction must be sometimes used, and a fond Indulgence in this Case is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and in truth not Love but hatred.

Prov. 13.
24.

So the Wise-man tells us, He that spareth the Rod hateth his Son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Ch. 19. 18. *Chasten thy Son while there is hope, and let*

let not thy Soul spare for his Crying.

And again, Foolishness is bound up in Ch. 22. 15.

the heart of a Child, and the Rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Withhold not correction from the child, Ch. 23. 13,

for if thou beatest him with the rod he ¹⁴

shall not dye : Thou shalt beat him with the Rod, and shalt deliver his Soul from

Hell. Again, The Rod and Reproof Ch. 29. 15.

giveth wisdom, but a Child left to himself bringeth his Mother to shame :

He mentions the Mother emphatically, because She many times is most faulty in this fond indulgence ; and therefore the shame and grief of it doth justly fall upon Her.

So that Correction is of great use, and often necessary ; and Parents that forbear it are not only cruel to their Children, but to Themselves : For God many times punisheth those Parents very severely who have neglected this necessary piece of Discipline. There
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is hardly to be found in the whole Bible a more terrible temporal Threatning than that concerning Eli and his House, for his fond indulgence to his Sons, who when they came to be Men proved such horrible Scandals not only to their Father, but to the Priest's Office; and to that degree as to make the Sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred by all the People. I will recite the Threatning at large, for an Admonition to Parents that they be not guilty in this kind. *The Lord said to Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle: In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his House; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his House for ever for the Iniquity which he knoweth, because his Sons made themselves vile and he restrained them*

1 Sam. 3.

11, 12, 13,

14.

them not : And therefore I have sworn unto the House of Eli, that the Iniquity of Eli's House shall not be purged with Sacrifice nor Offering for ever. I know very well that this enormous wickedness of Eli's Sons was committed by them after they were grown to be Men, but this Instance is nevertheless to my present purpose, there being hardly any doubt to be made but that it was the natural effect of a remiss and too indulgent an Education.

Yea very often God doth correct and remarkably punish fond Parents by those very Children who have wanted due Reproof and Correction : Of which the Scripture gives us a remarkable Instance in *Adonijah*, upon the mention of whose Rebellion against David his Father the Text takes particular notice of his Father's extream fondness of him, as both
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the procuring and meritorious cause of it, *For his Father had not displeased him at any time in saying, why hast thou done so?* And on the contrary, the wise Son of Sirach tells us, that *he that chastiseth his Son shall have joy of him.*

VII. The next thing I shall mention as a part of good Education is, *the bringing of Children to be publickly Catechised by the Minister, to prepare them for solemn Confirmation.*

It was with a particular respect to this work of *publick Catechising*, and by way of introduction to it, that I at first proposed to treat thus largely of the *good Education of Children*, hoping it might be of good use to handle this Subject more fully than it hath usually been done, at least to my knowledg, from the Pulpit.

And

And therefore I shall say something, and that very briefly concerning the *nature*, and concerning the *necessity* and great usefulness of *Catechising* Children.

First, for the *nature* of it, it is a particular way of teaching by *Question* and *Answer*, accommodated and fitted for the instruction of Children in the Principles of Religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where enjoined in *Scripture*; but *Instruction* in general is: And I doubt not but that upon this general warrant *Parents* and *Ministers* may use that way of Instruction of Children which is most fit and proper to instil into them the Principles of Religion. It is true, that the word *κατηχησιν*, from whence our word *Catechism* doth come, is used in *Scripture* to signify *teaching* in general: But it hath since by
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Ecclesiastical Writers been appropriated to that particular way of Instruction which hath been long in use in the *Christian* Church, and is commonly called *Catechising*.

Secondly, as to the *necessity* and great *usefulness* of it; *Catechising* hath a particular advantage as to Children: Because they are subject to forgetfulness, and want of attention. Now *Catechising* is a good Remedy against both these; because by *Questions* put to them Children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and must give some *Answer* to the *Question* that is ask'd: And a *Catechism* being short, and containing in a little compass the most necessary Principles of Religion, it is the more easily remembered.

The great *usefulness* and indeed the *necessity* of it plainly appears by experience. For it very seldom happens,

happens , that Children which have not been catechised have any clear and competent knowledge of the Principles of Religion ; and for want of this are incapable of receiving any great benefit by *Sermons* , which suppose persons to be in some measure instructed before-hand in the main Principles of Religion.

Besides, that if they have no Principles of Religion fix'd in them, they become an easy Prey to Seducers. And we have had sad experience of this in our Age ; and among many other dismal effects of our late Civil Confusions this is none of the least, that *publick Catechising* was almost wholly disused, and *private* too in most Families : For had *Catechising* of Children been continued, it is very probable that this Age would have been infested with fewer *Er-*

M

rors

rors and with fewer *Schisms*; and that there would not have been so much *Apostasy* from the *Fundamentals* of Religion. For it is, I think, a true *Observation*, that *Catechising*, and the *History* of the *Martyrs* have been the *two* great *Pillars* of the *Protestant Religion*.

There being then so great a *necessity* and usefulness of this *Way* of *Instruction*, I would earnestly recommend the practise of it to *Parents* and *Masters of Families* with respect to their *Children* and *Servants*. For I do not think that this *Work* should lie wholly upon *Ministers*. You must do your part at home, who by your constant residence in your Families have better and more easy opportunities of inculcating the Principles of Religion upon your *Children* and *Servants*. There you must prepare them for *publick Catechising*, that the

the Work of the *Minister* may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns *Ministers*, I intend by God's assistance, so soon as the business can be put into a good method, to begin this *Exercise*. And I do earnestly intreat all that have *young Children* and *Servants*, to bring such of them as are fit to be publicly Catechised and instructed in the Principles of Religion: And I shall as often as shall be thought expedient spend some time in this Work, between *afternoon Prayers* and *Sermon*.

The *Catechism* to be used shall be that appointed in our *Liturgy*, which is short, and contains in it the chief Principles of the *Christian Religion*. And I shall make a short and plain explication of the Heads of it, suitable to the capacity of Children. And because this may

not probably be of so great advantage to those who are of riper Years and Understandings, yet because Children are to be instructed as well as men, I must intreat those who are like to carry away the least *profit* to bring with them the more *patience*: Especially since I shall for their sakes, in the constant course of my *Afternoon Sermons*, more largely and fully explain the *chief Principles* of the *Christian Belief*: A Work which you know I have some time ago entred upon.

VIII. The *last* thing I shall mention, and with which the State of *Childhood* ends, is the *bringing of Children to the Bishop, to be solemnly Confirmed*, by their taking upon themselves the *Vow* which by their *Sureties* they entred into at their *Baptism*.

This

This is acknowledged by almost all *Seets* and *Parties* of *Christians* to be of *Primitive* Antiquity, and of very great *use* when it is performed with that due preparation of persons for it, by the *Ministers* to whose charge they belong, and with that seriousness and Solemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very desirable that *Confirmations* should be more frequent, and in smaller Numbers at a time; that so the *Bishop* may apply himself more particularly to every Person that is to be *Confirmed*, that by this means the thing may make the deeper impression and lay the stronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wish, both to prevent confusion, and for the ease also of the *Bishop* that his work may not be endless, that

Ministers would take care that none may present themselves to the *Bi-shop* or be presented by the *Ministers*, to be *Confirmed* a second time: Because a great many are wont to offer themselves every time there is a *Confirmation*; which is both very disorderly and unreasonable, there being every whit as little reason for a *second Confirmation*, as there is for a *second Baptism*: And if any persons need so often to be *Confirmed*, it is a sign that *Confirmation* hath very little effect upon them.

II.

II. I proceed to the *Second general Head*, which was to give some more particular *Directions* for the management of this *Work* of the good *Education* of *Children* in such a way as may be most effectual to its *End*.

First, endeavour, as well as you can, to discover the particular temper

per and *disposition* of Children, that you may suit and apply yourselves to it, and by striking in with Nature may steer and govern them in the sweetest and easiest way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which Husbandmen are wont very carefully to enquire into, that they may apply the *Seed* to the *Soil*, and plant in it that which is most proper for it :

*Quid quæq; ferat regio, quid quæq;
recuset.*

*Hic segetes, illic veniunt fœliciùs
uvæ.*

Every *Soil* is not proper for all sorts of *Grain* or *Fruit* ; one ground is fit for *Corn*, another for *Vines* : And so is it in the *tempers* and *dispositions* of *Children* : Some are more capable of one *Excellency* and *Virtue*

than another, and some more strongly inclined to one *Vice* than another: Which is a great *Secret* of *Nature* and *Providence*, and it is very hard to give a just and satisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular *Tempers* of *Children*, that we may accordingly apply our care to them and manage them to the best advantage: That where we discern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may cast in such *Seeds* and *Principles* as, by their suitableness to their particular *Tempers*, we judge most likely to take soonest and deepest root: And when these are grown up, and have taken possession of the *Soil*, they will prepare it for the *Seeds* of other *Virtues*.

And so likewise when we discover in their *Nature* a more particular disposition and leaning towards
any

any thing which is bad, we must with great diligence and care apply such Instructions and plant such Principles in them, as may be most effectual to alter this evil disposition of their Minds ; that whilst Nature is tender and flexible we may gently bend it the other way : And it is almost incredible what strange things by Prudence and Patience may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverse and crooked Disposition.

So that it is of very great use to observe and discover the particular Tempers of Children, that in all our instruction and management of them we may apply our selves to their Nature and hit their peculiar Disposition: By this means we may lead and draw them to their Duty in human ways, and such as are much more agreeable to their Temper than constraint
and

and necessity, which are harsh and churlish, and against the grain. Whatever is done with delight goes on cheerfully, but when Nature is compell'd and forc'd things proceed heavily : Therefore, when we are forming and fashioning Children to Religion and Virtue, we should make all the advantage we can of their particular Tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct Nature in the way it will most easily go. Every Temper gives some particular advantage and *handle* whereby we may take hold of them and steer them more easily : But if we take a contrary course we must expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctance.

Such ways of Education as are prudently fitted to the particular dispositions of Children are like

Wind

Wind and *Tide* together, which will make the *Work* go on amain : But those ways and methods which are applied cros to Nature are like *Wind* against *Tide*, which make a great stir and conflict, but a very slow progress. Not that I do or can expect that all *Parents* should be *Philosophers*, but that they should use the best wisdom they have in a matter of so great concernment.

Secondly, in your instruction of Children endeavour to plant in them those *Principles* of Religion and Virtue which are most substantial, and are like to have the best influence upon the future government of their Lives, and to be of continual and lasting use to them. Look to the *Seed* you sow, that it be sound and good, and for the benefit and use of mankind : *This* is to be regarded, as well as the *Ground* into which the *Seed* is cast:
La-

Labour to beget in Children a right apprehension of those things which are most fundamental and necessary to the knowledge of God and our Duty ; and to make them sensible of the great evil and danger of Sin ; and to work in them a firm belief of the next Life and of the eternal Rewards and Recompences of it. And if these *Principles* once take root they will spread far and wide, and have a vast influence upon all their actions ; and unless some powerful Lust, or temptation to Vice hurry them away, they will probably accompany them and stick by them as long as they live.

Many Parents, according to their best knowledge and apprehensions of Religion in which they themselves have been educated, and too often according to their Zeal without knowledge, do take
great

great care to plant little and ill-grounded Opinions in the minds of their Children, and to fashion them to a *Party* by infusing into them the particular Notions and Phrases of a *Seet*, which when they come to be examin'd have no substance, nor perhaps sense in them: And by this means, instead of bringing them up in the true and solid Principles of Christianity, they take a great deal of pains to instruct them in some doubtful Doctrines of no great moment in Religion, and perhaps false at the bottom; whereby instead of teaching them to hate Sin they fix them in Schism, and teach them to hate and damn all those who differ from them and are opposite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better *Christians* than themselves.

And

And indeed nothing is more common and more to be pitied, than to see with what a confident contempt and scornful pity some ill-instructed and ignorant people will lament the blindness and ignorance of those who have a thousand times more true knowledge and skill than themselves, not only in all other things, but even in the practise as well as knowledge of the Christian Religion; believing those who do not relish their affected Phrases and uncouth Forms of speech to be ignorant of the *Mystery* of the *Gospel*, and utter strangers to the Life and Power of Godliness.

But now what is the effect of this mistaken way of Education? The *Harvest* is just answerable to the *Husbandry*,

Infelix lolium & steriles dominantur avenæ;

As

As they have sown, so they must expect to reap; and instead of good Grain to have Cockle and Tares: *They have sown the Wind, and they shall reap the Whirlwind*, as the expression is in the *Prophet*; instead of true Religion, and of a sober and peaceable Conversation, there will come up new and wild Opinions, a factious and uncharitable spirit, a furious and boisterous zeal, which will neither suffer themselves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you desire to reap the effects of true Piety and Religion, you must take care to plant in Children the main and substantial Principles of *Christianity*, which may give them a general *byass* to holiness and goodness, and not to little particular Opinions, which being once fix'd in them by the strong prejudice of Education will

will hardly ever be rooted out.

Thirdly, do all that in you lies to check and discourage in them the first beginnings of Sin and Vice: So soon as ever they appear pluck them up by the roots. This is like the weeding of Corn, which is a necessary piece of good Husbandry. Vices like ill weeds grow apace, and if they once take to the Soil it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: But if we watch them and cut them up as soon as they appear, this will discourage the Root and make it dye.

Therefore take great heed that your Children be not habituated and accustomed to any evil course. A Vice that is of any considerable growth and continuance will soon grow obstinate, and having once spread its roots it will be a very difficult matter to clear the ground
of

of it. A Child may be so long neglected till he be overgrown with Vice to that degree that it may be out of the power of Parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved disposition of Children it will be one of the hardest things in the World to give a stop to it. It is the *Apostle's* caution to take heed of being harden'd by the deceitfulness of Sin, which they who go on in an evil course will most certainly be. We should observe the first appearances of evil in Children, and kill those young Serpents as soon as they stir lest they bite them to death.

Fourthly, bring them, as soon as they are capable of it, to the publick Worship of God, where He hath promised his more especial presence and blessing. It is in Zion, the place of God's publick

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Wor-

Worship, where the Lord hath commanded the blessing even Life for evermore: There are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of Grace in us: This is the Pool where the Angel useth to come and to move the Waters: Bring your Children hither, where if they diligently attend they may meet with an Opportunity of being healed.

And when they come from the Church, call them frequently to an account of what they have heard and learn'd there: This will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their Memories with greater care, and will fix it there so as to make a deeper and more lasting impression upon their Minds.

Fifthly, be careful more especially to put them upon the exercise

cise and practice of Religion and Virtue, in such Instances as their understanding and age are capable of. Teach them some short and proper *Forms* of Prayer to God, to be said by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at least every Morning and Evening. A great many Children neglect this, not from any ill disposition of mind, but because no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and custom of any thing will after a little while make that easy and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctance.

Knowledge and *Practice* do mutually promote and help forward one another. *Knowledge* prepares and disposeth for *Practice*, and

Practice is the best way to perfect *Knowledge* in any kind. Mere *Speculation* is a very raw and rude thing in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by *Practice* and *Experience*. The most exact skill in *Geography* is nothing compared with the knowledge of that Man who besides the *Speculative* part hath travell'd over and carefully view'd the Countries he hath read of. The most knowing man in the Art and Rules of *Navigation* is no body in comparison of an experienced *Pilot* and *Seaman*. Because knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere *Speculation* as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For men may easily mistake Rules, but frequent *Practice* and *Experience* are seldom deceived. Give me a man
that

that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfy me that he knows how to do it. That Saying of our B. Saviour, *If any man will do my will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self*, is a clear determination of this matter, namely, That they understand the Will of God best who are most careful to do it. And so likewise the best way to know what God is, is to transcribe his Perfections in our Lives and actions; to be *holy*, and *just*, and *good*, and *merciful* as He is.

Therefore when the minds of Children are once thoroughly possessed with the true Principles of Religion, we should bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know: Let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well; rather to a-

void what is evil, in all its shapes and appearances, and to practise their Duty in the several Instances of it, than to *Speak with the Tongues* Job 28.28. *of Men and Angels : Unto Man He said, Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil* 1 Joh. 2. 3, *is understanding : Hereby, saith* 4. *St. John, we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments : He that saith I know him and keepeth not his Commandments is a lyar, and the truth is not in him.*

Xenophon tells us, that the *Per-
sians* instead of making their Children learned, taught them to be virtuous; and instead of filling their heads with fine Speculations, taught them honesty, and sincerity, and resolution; and endeavoured to make them wise and valiant, just and temperate. *Lycurgus* also in the institution of the *Lacedemonian Commonwealth* took no care about

about Learning, but only about the Lives and Manners of their Children : Though I should think that the care of both is best, and that Learning would very much help to form the Manners of Children, and to make them both wiser and better Men : And therefore, with the leave of so great and wise a *Lawgiver*, I cannot but think that this was a defect in his *Institution* : Because Learning, if it be under the conduct of true wisdom and goodness is not only an ornament but a great advantage to the better Government of any Kingdom or Commonwealth.

Sixthly, there must be great care and diligence used in this whole business of *Education*, and more particularly in the *Instruction* of Children. There must be line 1sa. 28. 10. upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, as the

Prophet expresseth it. The Principles of Religion and Virtue must be instill'd and dropt into them by such degrees and in such a measure as they are capable of receiving them : For Children are narrow-mouth'd Vessels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they must also be accustomed to the practice and exercise of Religion and goodness by degrees, till Holiness and Virtue have taken root, and they be well settled and confirm'd in a good course. Now this requires constant attendance and even the patience of the Husbandman to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In some Children the Seeds that are sown fall into a greater depth of earth and therefore are of a slow disclosure, and it may be
a con-

a considerable time before they appear above ground ; it is long before they shoot and grow up to any height, and yet they may afterwards be very considerable: *Which*, as an ingenious *Sir H. W. Author* observes, *should excite the care and prevent the despair of Parents: For if their Children be not such speedy Spreaders and Branchers as the Vine, they may perhaps prove*

—*proles tardè crescentis Olivæ.*

It is a work of great pains and difficulty to rectify a perverse Disposition. It is more easy to *palliate* the corruption of Nature, but the *cure* of it requires time and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be covered and conceal'd, but it is a great work to conquer and subdue it. It
must

must first be check'd and stopp'd in its course, and then weaken'd and the force of it be broken by degrees, and at last, if it be possible, destroyed and rooted out.

Seventhly and Lastly, to all these means we must add our constant and earnest *Prayers* to God for our Children, that his Grace may take an early possession of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations and towardly dispositions for goodness: And that he would be pleased to accompany all our endeavours to that end with his powerful Assistance and Blessing; without which all that we can do will prove ineffectual. *Parents* may plant, and *Ministers* may water, but it is *God* that must give the increase.

Be

Be often then upon your knees for your Children. Do not only teach them to pray for themselves, but do you likewise with great fervour and earnestness commend them to God and to the power of his Grace which alone is able to sanctify them. Apply your selves to the Father of lights; from whom comes every good and perfect gift: Beg his H. Spirit, and ask Divine knowledge and wisdom for them of Him, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth no man: Beseech Him to season their tender years with his Fear, which is the beginning of Wisdom: Pray for them as Abraham did for Ishmael, *Oh that Ishmael may live in thy sight.*

Many Parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themselves to Prayer, earnest and importunate Prayer to God,

God, as their last Refuge: *Monica*, the Mother of *St. Austin*, by the constancy and importunity of her Prayers, obtained of God the conversion of her Son, who proved afterwards so great and glorious an Instrument of good to the Church of God: According to what *St. Ambrose Bishop of Milain*, to encourage her to persevere in her fervent Prayers for her Son, had said to her, *Fieri non potest ut filius tot lachrymarum pereat*, It cannot be, says he, that a Son of so many Prayers and Tears should miscarry. God's Grace is free, but it is not likely but that God will at last give in this Blessing to our earnest Prayers and faithful Endeavours.

Therefore pray for them without ceasing, pray and faint not. Great importunity in Prayer seldom fails of a gracious answer: Our B. Saviour

viour spake two *Parables* on purpose to encourage us herein: Not because God is moved, much less because he is tired out with our Importunity; but because it is an Argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great Goodness: And to them that believe all things are possible, says our *B. Lord*, To whom &c.

S E R M O N I I I .

O F T H E

Education of Children.

THE HISTORY OF

THE

REPUBLIC OF

S E R M O N III.

O F T H E

Education of Children.

P R O V. XXII. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart
from it.*

I Proceed to the next general
Head which I proposed,
namely,

III. *To discover some of the more
remarkable and common Miscarriages in
the management of this Work. I do
not hereby mean gross neglects for
want of care, but mistakes and mis-*
O *carriages*

III.

carriages for want of *prudence* and *skill*, even when there is no want of care and diligence in *Parents* and *Instructors*. And I shall for *Method's* sake reduce the more considerable and common *Miscarriages* to these three *Heads*.

First, in matter of *Instruction*.

Secondly, in matter of *Example*.

Thirdly, in matter of *Reproof*
and *Correction*.

I. in matter of *Instruction*. *Parents* do very often mainly miscarry in not teaching their *Children* the true *difference* between *Good* and *Evil*, and the *degrees* of them: As when we teach them any thing is a *Sin* that really is not, or that any thing is not a *Sin* which in truth is so: Or when we teach them to lay more stress and weight upon things than they will bear; making

making that which perhaps is only *convenient* to be in the highest degree *neccessary*, or that which it may be is only *inconvenient*, or may be an occasion of *Scandal* to some weak Christians, to be a Sin in its own nature damnable.

Parents do likewise lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to instruct them in lesser things, and as strict in enjoining them, and as severe in punishing the commission or neglect of them, according as they esteem them *good* or *evil*, as if they were the *weightier things of the Law* and matters of the greatest moment in Religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning Parents that have with great severity restrained their Children in the wearing of their hair: Nay I can remember since the wearing of it below
O 2 their

their Ears was looked upon as a Sin of the first magnitude; and when *Ministers* generally, whatever their *Text* was, did in every *Sermon* either find or make an occasion with great severity to reprove the great Sin of *long hair*; and if they saw any one in the *Congregation* guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewise known some Parents that have strictly forbidden their Children the use of some sorts of *Recreations* and *Games* under the notion of heinous Sins, upon a mistake that because there was in them a mixture of *Fortune* and *Skill* they were therefore unlawful; a Reason which I think hath no weight and force in it, tho I do not deny but human Laws may for very prudent reasons either restrain or forbid the use of these
Games,

Games, because of the boundless expence both of *Money* and *Time* which is many times occasioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps the same Persons, that would not only allow but even encourage their Children to despise the very *Service of God* under some *Forms*, which according to their several apprehensions they esteemed to be *Superstitious* or *Factionous*. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of most dangerous consequence, and have often observed it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all Religion.

And how many Parents teach their Children *doubtful Opinions*, and lay great stress upon them as if they were *saving* or *damning* Points; and hereby set such an edge and keenness upon them for or against some indifferent modes and *circum-*
stances

stances of God's Worship as if the very Being of a Church and the Essence of Religion were concerned in them?

These certainly are great *Mistakes*, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of so wide and vast a difference as *good and evil, lawful and unlawful, indifferent and necessary*. For when Children come to be Men, and to have a freer and larger view of the World, and shall find by the contrary practice of very wise and serious Persons that they have quite different apprehensions of these matters, and do not think that to be a *Sin* which their Parents have so strictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times punished them more severely for the doing of it than if they had told a *Lye*, this may make them apt to question
on

on whether any thing be a Sin : And the violence which they offer to their Consciences, and the *strein* that they give them upon such an occasion, by complying with the general practice of others contrary to the Principles of their Education, doth many times open a gap for great and real Sins.

Besides, that Children which are bred up in high Prejudices *for* or *against* indifferent *Opinions* or *Practices* in Religion, do usually when they are grown up prove to be Men of narrow and contracted Spirits, peevish and froward and uncharitable, and many times great *Bigots* and *Zealots* either in the way of *Superstition* or *Faction*, according to the Principles which have been instill'd into them to *byass* them either way : And very hardly do they ever quit themselves so clearly of their Prejudi-

ces, as to become wise and peaceable and substantial Christians.

In short, if we carefully observe it, we shall find that when Children have been thus indiscreetly educated, their Religion differs as much from that of sober and judicious Christians, as the Civil behaviour and conversation of those who have been unskilfully and conceitedly taught how to carry themselves, does from the behaviour of those who have had a more free and generous Education.

II. In matter of *Example*. There are many Parents whose Lives are Exemplary in the main, who yet seem to use too great a freedom before their Children. It is an old Rule, and I think a very good one,

Maxima debetur pueris reverentia,

There

There is a very great reverence due to Children. There are many things which are not Sins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all persons. There are some words and actions so trivial and light, that they are not fit to be said or done before those for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of Conversation which is only proper among Equals in Age and Quality, which if we use before our Superiors and Betters, we seem to condemn *them*; if before our Inferiors, *they* will go nigh to condemn us.

It ought to be consider'd, that Children do not understand the exact limits of *good* and *evil*, so that if in our words or actions we go to the utmost bounds of that which is lawful, we shall be in danger

danger of shewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their steps, and therefore we will not venture them to play about a Precipice, or near a dangerous Place, where yet Men that will take care may go safely enough. And therefore Parents should be very careful to keep their Children from the Confines of Evil, and at as great a distance from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions should ever be temper'd with gravity and circumspection, that Children may not see or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to Sin, or carry them to the Borders of Vice; lest they should not stop just there, but take a step further than you intended they should go.

III. In

III. In matter of *Reproof* and *Correction* ; many Religious and careful Parents are guilty of *two* great Miscarriages in this Part of Education.

First, Of too much *rigor* and *severity* ; which , especially with some sort of Tempers, hath very ill success. The first experiment that should be made upon Children should be to allure them to their Duty, and by reasonable inducements to gain them to the love of Goodness ; by *Praise* and *Reward*, and sometimes by *Shame* and *Disgrace* : And if this will do, there will be no occasion to proceed to Severity ; especially not to great Severities, which are very unsuitable to Human Nature. A mixture of prudent and seasonable *Reproof* or *Correction* when there is occasion for it, may do very well ; but *Whips* are not the *Cords* of a Man :
Human

Human Nature may be *driven* by them, but it must be *led* by sweeter and gentler ways.

Speusippus caused the Pictures of Joy and Gladness to be set round about his School, to signify that the business of Education ought to be rendered as pleasant as may be : And indeed Children stand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to Learning and Goodness. *Metus haud diuturni Magister officij*, says *Tully* ; Fear alone will not teach a man his Duty and hold him to it for any long time : For when that is removed , Nature will break loose and do like it self : Besides, that frequent Corrections make Punishments to lose their Awe and force, and are apt to spoil the Disposition of Children and to harden them against Shame ; and after a while they will despise Correction, when they find they can endure it.

Great

Great Severities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended: And many times those who were bred up in a very severe School, hate Learning ever after for the sake of the cruelty that was used to force it upon them: And so likewise an endeavour to bring Children to Piety and Goodness by unreasonable strictness and rigor does often beget in them a lasting disgust and Prejudice against Religion, and teacheth them, as *Erasmus* says, *virtutem simul odisse & nōsse*, to hate Virtue at the same time that they teach them to know it: For by this means Virtue is represented to the minds of Children under a great disadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together: So that whenever they think of Religion and Virtue, they remember the Severity which was wont to

ac-

accompany the Instructions about it ; and the natural hatred which men have for Punishment is by this means derived upon Religion it self. And indeed how can it be expected that Children should love their Duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of *Rods* shak'd over them ?

I insist upon this the more, because I do not remember to have observed more notorious Instances of great miscarriage, than in the Children of very strict and severe Parents. Of which I can give no other account but this, that Nature when it is thus overcharged recoils the more terribly : It hath something in it like the *Spring* of an Engine, which being forcibly press'd does upon the first liberty return back with so much the greater violence : In like manner the vicious dispositions of Children,

dren, when restrain'd merely by the severity of Parents, do break forth strangely as soon as ever they get loose and from under their Discipline.

Secondly, Another Miscarriage in this matter is, when Reproof and Correction are accompanied and managed with Passion. This is to betray one Fault, and perhaps a greater, in the punishment of another. Besides, that this makes Reproof and Correction to look like Revenge and Hatred, which usually does not persuade and reform but provoke and exasperate. And this probably may be one reason of the *Apostle's* admonition, *Parents provoke not your Children unto wrath, because that is never likely to have any good effect. Correction is a kind of Physick, which ought never to be administred in Passion, but upon counsel and good advice.*
And

And that *Passion* is incident to Parents upon this occasion, the *Apostle* tells us when he says, that
Heb. 10. 12. *the Parents of our flesh chasten us for their pleasure*, that is, they do it many times to gratify their *Passion*; but *God* chastens us for our profit, not in Anger but with a design to do us good : And can we have a better Patern than our heavenly Father to imitate ?

A *Father* is as it were a *Prince* and a *Judge* in his *Family* : There he gives *Laws*, and inflicts *Censures* and *Punishments* upon *Offenders*. But how misbecoming a thing would it be to see a *Judge* pass Sentence upon a man in *Choler* ? It is the same thing to see a *Father* in the heat and fury of his *Passion* correct his *Child*. If a *Father* could but see himself in this *Mood*, and how ill his *Passion* becomes him, instead of being *Angry*

gry with his Child he would be out of Patience with himself. I proceed to the next thing I proposed, namely,

IV. To make out the truth of the *Proposition* contained in the *Text*, by shewing how *the good Education of Children comes to be of so great advantage and to have so good and lasting an influence upon their whole Lives.* IV.

I confess there are some wild and savage Natures, monstrous and prodigious Tempers, hard as the Rocks, and barren as the Sand upon the Sea-shore ; which discover strong and early propensions to vice, and a violent antipathy to Goodness. Such Tempers are next to desperate, but yet they are not utterly intractable to the Grace of God and the Religious Care of Parents.

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I hope such Tempers as these are very rare, though God is pleased they should sometimes appear in the World, as instances of the great corruption and degeneracy of Human Nature, and of the great need of Divine Grace. But surely there is no Temper that is absolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced against that which is good. This would be so terrible an Objection against the Providence of God as would be very hard to be answered. God be thanked, most Tempers are tractable to good Education, and there is very great probability of the good success of it, if it be carefully and wisely managed.

And for the Confirmation of this *Truth* I shall instance in *two* very great *Advantages* of a Religious and virtuous Education of Children.

1st. It

1st. It gives Religion and Virtue the advantage of the first Possession.

2^{dly}. The Advantage of Habit and Custom.

First, Good Education gives Religion and Virtue the *Advantage* of the *first Possession*. The Mind of Man is an active Principle, and will be employed about something or other. It cannot stand idle, and will therefore take up with that which first offers it self. So soon as Reason puts forth it self, and the Understanding begins to be exercised, the Mind of man discovers a natural thirst after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes first. If it have not the *Waters of Life* and the *pure streams of Goodness* to allay that thirst, it will seek to quench it in the filthy *Puddles* and impure *Pleasures* of this World.

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Now

Now since Children will be busying their Minds about something, it is good that they should be entertained with the best things, and with the best Notions and Principles of which their Understanding and Age are capable. It is a happy thing to be Principled, and, as I may say, *Prejudiced* the better way, and that Religion should get the first possession of their Hearts. For it is certainly a great Advantage to Religion to be planted in a tender and fresh Soil. And if *Parents* be careless and neglect this advantage, *the Enemy* will be sure to sow his *Tares* whilst the *Husbandman* is asleep.

Therefore we should prevent the *Devil* by giving *God* and *Goodness* an early possession of our Children, and by letting Him into their Hearts betimes. *Possession* is a great Point, and it is of mighty
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consequence to have Nature planted with good Seeds before vicious inclinations spring up and grow into strength and Habit.

I know that there is a spiteful *Proverb* currant in the World, and the *Devil* hath taken care to spread it to the discouragement of an early Piety, *A young Saint and an old Devil*; but notwithstanding this, a young Saint is most likely to prove an old one. *Solomon* to be sure was of this mind, and I make no doubt but he made as wise and true *Proverbs* as any body hath done since: *Him* only excepted who was a much greater and wiser Man than *Solomon*.

Secondly, Good Education gives likewise the *Advantage* of *Habit* and *Custom*; and *Custom* is of mighty force. It is, as *Pliny* in one of his *Epistles* says of it, *efficacissimus omnium rerum Magister*, the most power-

ful and effectual Master in every kind. It is an acquired and a sort of *Second Nature*, and next to Nature it self a principle of greatest power. Custom bears a huge sway in all Human actions. Men love those things and do them with ease to which they have been long inured and accustomed. And on the contrary men go against Custom with great regret and uneasiness.

And among all others, *that Custom* is most strong which is begun in Childhood: And we see in Experience the strange power of Education in forming persons to Religion and Virtue. Now Education is nothing but certain Customs planted in Childhood, and which have taken deep Root whilst Nature was tender.

We see likewise in common experience how dangerous an evil Habit and Custom is, and how
hard

hard to be alter'd. Therefore the *Cretians*, when they would curse a man to purpose, wish'd that the *Gods* would engage him in some *bad Custom*, looking upon a man after that to be irrecoverably lost. So on the other Side, to be engaged in a *good Custom* is an unspeakable advantage ; especially for Children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous course, before the Habits of Sin and Vice have taken root and are confirm'd in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil : But yet this ought not to discourage us, because it is certain in Experience that a contrary *Custom* hath done much in many Cases, even where *Nature* hath been strongly inclined the other way. *Demosthenes* did by great Resolution and almost infinite Pains, and after a long Habit, alter the natural imperfection of

his Speech, and even in despite of Nature became the most eloquent Man perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a *Demonstration*, for *what hath been done may be done.*

So that it is not universally true which *Aristotle* says, *That Nature cannot be altered.* It is true indeed in the Instance which he gives of throwing a Stone upward; you cannot, says he, by any Custom, nay though you fling it up never so often, teach a Stone to ascend of it self: And so it is in many other Instances in which *Nature* is *peremptory*: But Nature is not always so; but sometimes hath a great latitude: As we see in young Trees, which though they naturally grow straight up, yet being gently bent may be made to grow any way. But above all, *Moral* inclinations and habits do admit of great alteration,

ration, and are subject to the power of a contrary Custom.

Indeed Children when they come to be Men should take great care, that they do not owe their Religion only to *Custom*; but they should upon consideration and due examination of the grounds of it, so far as they are capable of doing it, make it their *Choice*. And yet for all that we must not deny the best Religion in the World this greatest advantage of all other. It is certainly a great happiness for Children to be inclined to that which when they come to understand themselves they would make their *Choice*, if they were indifferent: But an indifferency cannot be preserved in Children: And therefore, since they will certainly be *biassed* one way or other, there is all the reason in the World why we should endeavour to *byass* them

them the better way. Parents may often mistake about what is best, but if they love their Children they cannot but wish and endeavour that they may be good and do what is best.

I come now to the *last Head* I propos'd which was

V. V. To endeavour by the most powerful *Arguments* I can offer, to stir up and persuade those whose Duty this is, to discharge it with great Care and Conscience.

If the foregoing *Discourse* be true, what can be said to those who are guilty in the highest degree of the gross neglect of this great Duty? Who, neither by *Instruction*, nor *Example*, nor *Restraint* from evil, do endeavour to make their Children good. Some Parents are such *Monsters*, I had almost said *Devils*, as not to know how

to

to give good things to their Children ; but instead of *bread* give them a *stone*, instead of *fish* give them a *serpent*, instead of an *egg* give them a *scorpion*, as our Saviour expresseth it.

These are *evil* indeed, who train up their Children for ruin and destruction ; in the service of the *Devil*, and in the Trade and Mystery of iniquity : Who, instead of teaching them the *Fear of the Lord*, infuse into them the Principles of *Atheism*, and *Irreligion*, and *Prophaneness* : Instead of teaching them to love and reverence Religion, they teach them to hate and despise it, and to *make a mock* both of *Sin* and *Holiness* : Instead of training them up in the knowledge of the *H. Scriptures* which are able to *make men wise unto Salvation*, they do *edificare ad Gehennam*, they edify them for *Hell*, by teaching them to
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prophane that *Holy Book*, and to abuse the *Word of God* which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into Jest and Raillery: Instead of teaching them to *Pray* and to *bless* the *Name of God*, they teach them to *Blaspheme* that *Great and terrible Name*, and to *prophane* it by their continual *Oaths* and *Imprecations*: And instead of bringing them to *God's Church*, they carry them to the *Devil's Chappels*, to *Playhouses* and *Places of debauchery*, those *Schools* and *Nurseries of Lewdness* and *Vice*.

Thus they, who ought to be the great *Teachers* and *Examples* of *Holiness* and *Virtue*, are the chief *encouragers* and *Patterns* of *Vice* and *wickedness* in their *Children*; and instead of *restraining* them from evil, they *countenance* them in it, and check all forward inclinations to *Goodness*; till at last they make them

them ten times more the Children of Wrath, than they were by that corrupt Nature which they derived from them; and hereby treasure up, both for their Children and themselves, wrath against the Day of wrath and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.

But I hope there are few or none such here. They do not use to frequent God's House and Worship. And therefore I shall apply myself to those who are not so notoriously guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good Education of their Children. And for the greater conviction of such Parents, I shall offer to them the following Considerations.

First, Consider what a sad Inheritance you have conveyed to your Children. You have transmitted to them corrupt and depraved Natures, evil and vicious Inclinations:

tions: You have begotten them in your own Image and likeness, so that *by Nature* they are *Children of wrath*. Now methinks Parents that have a due sense of this should be very solicitous, by the best means they can use, to free them from that *Curse*; by endeavouring to correct those perverse dispositions and cursed inclinations which they have transmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken Estate which from you is descended upon them.

When a Man hath by *Treason* tainted his *Blood* and forfeited his *Estate*, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his Children, and think of the Injury which hath been done to them by his Fault? And how solicitous is he, before he dye, to petition the *King* for favour to his Children? How earnestly doth he charge his Friends to be

be careful of them and kind to them ? That by these means he may make the best reparation he can of their *Fortune* which hath been ruin'd by his *Fault*.

And have Parents such a tenderness for their Children, in reference to their Estate and condition in this World ; and have they none for the good estate of their Souls and their eternal condition in another World ? If you are sensible that their *Blood* is tainted, and that their best *Fortunes* are ruin'd by your sad *Misfortune* ; Why do you not bestir your selves for the repairing of God's Image in them ? Why do you not travel in birth till *Christ* be formed in them ? Why do you not pray earnestly to *God* and give *Him* no rest, who hath reprieved and it may be pardoned you, that He would extend his Grace to them also, and grant them the Blessings of his *New Covenant* ?

All

All your Children are begotten of the *Bond-woman* ; therefore we should pray as *Abraham* did, *O that Ishmael may live in thy sight* : *O that these Sons of Hagar may be Heirs of a Blessing.*

Secondly , Consider in the next place, that good Education is the very best Inheritance that you can leave to your Children. It is a wife Saying of *Solomon*, that *Wisdom is good with an Inheritance* ; but surely an *Inheritance* , without *Wisdom* and *Virtue* to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many Parents are there who omit no Care and Industry to get an Estate that they may leave it to their Children, but use no means to form their Minds and Manners for the right use and enjoyment of it ; without which it had been much happier for them to have been left in great Poverty and straits ?

Dost

Dost thou love thy Child? This is true love to any one, to do the best for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your Children, this may be all the fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good Education. All other things are uncertain. You may raise your Children to *Honour*, and settle a *Noble Estate* upon them to support it: You may leave them, as you think, to faithful *Guardians*, and by kindness and obligation procure them many *Friends*: And when you have done all this, their *Guardians* may prove unfaithful and treacherous, and in the *Changes* and *Revolutions* of the *World* their *Honours* may slip from under them, and their *Riches* may take to themselves wings and fly away: And when these are gone, and they come to be nipp'd with the Frosts

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of Adversity, their *Friends* will fall off like leaves in *Autumn*. This is a *fore evil*, which yet I have seen under the *Sun*.

But if the good Education of your Children hath made them wise and virtuous, you have provided an Inheritance for them which is out of the reach of Fortune, and *cannot be taken from them*. Crates the Philosopher used to stand in the highest Places of the City, and to cry out to the Inhabitants, O ye People! why do you toil to get *Estates* for your Children, when you take no care of their Education? This is, as Diogenes said, to take care of the *Shoe*, but none of the *foot* that is to wear it; to take great pains for an *Estate* for your Children, but none at all to teach them how to use it; that is, to take great care to undo them, but none to make them happy.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Consider that by a careful and Religious Education of your Children you provide for your own Comfort and Happiness. However they happen to prove, you will have the comfort of a good Conscience and of having done your Duty. If they be good, they are matter of great Comfort and Joy to their Parents. *A wise Son, saith Solomon, maketh a glad Father.* It is a great satisfaction to see that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and industry, and that the work of our hands doth prosper. The Son of *Sirach*, among several things for which he reckons a Man happy, mentions this in the first place, *He* Eccclus. 29:
that hath joy of his Children. 7.

On the contrary, in wicked Children the honour of a Family fails, our Name withers, and in

the next Generation will quite be blotted out: Whereas a hopeful Posterity is a prospect of a kind of *Eternity*. We cannot leave a better and more lasting *Monument* of our selves, than in wise and virtuous Children. *Buildings* and *Books* are but *dead* things in comparison of these *living Memorials* of our Selves.

By the good Education of your Children you provide for your Selves some of the best Comforts both for this World and the other. For *this World* ; and that at such a Time when you most stand in need of Comfort , I mean the Time of *Sickness* and *old Age*. Wise men have been wont to lay up some *præsidia Senectutis*, something to support them in that gloomy and melancholy Time, as *Books*, and *Friends*, or the like. But there is no such external Comfort at such a Time as good and dutiful Children.

dren. They will *then* be the *light* of our *Eyes*, and the *Cordial* of our fainting Spirits ; and will recompence all our former care of *them* by their present care of *us* : And when we are decaying and withering away, we shall have the pleasure to see our *Youth* as it were renewed, and our selves flourishing again in our Children. The Son of *Sirach* speaking of the comfort which a good Father hath in a well educated Son, *Though he dye*, says Ecclus. 30. he, yet he is as if he were not dead, for 4, 5. he hath left one behind him that is like himself. While he lived he saw and rejoiced in him, and when he died he was not sorrowful.

Whereas on the contrary, a foolish Son is, as *Solomon* tells us, a *beast* to his Mother, the miscarriage of a Child being apt most tenderly to affect the Mother. Such Parents as neglect their Children, do

as it were provide so many *pains* and *Aches* for themselves against they come to be *Old*. And rebellious Children are to their infirm and aged Parents so many aggravations of an evil Day, so many burthens of their Age: They help to bow them down and to bring *their gray hairs* so much the sooner *with sorrow* to the grave. They do usually repay their Parents all the neglects of their Education by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good Children will likewise be an unspeakable *Comfort* to us in the *Other World*. When we come to appear before God at the *Day of Judgment*, to be able to say to *Him*, *Lo! here am I and the Children which thou hast given me*: How will this comfort our Hearts, and make us lift up our Heads with joy in that Day?

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Consider that the surest Foundation of the publick welfare and happiness is laid in the good Education of Children. *Families* are increased by *Children*, and *Cities* and *Nations* are made up of *Families*. And this is a matter of so great concernment both to *Religion* and the *Civil* happiness of a Nation, that anciently the best constituted *Commonwealths* did commit this care to the *Magistrate* more than to *Parents*.

When *Antipater* demanded of the *Spartans* fifty of their Children for *Hostages*, they offer'd rather to deliver to Him twice as many Men; so much did they value the loss of their *Countrey's* Education. But now amongst us this Work lies chiefly upon *Parents*. There are several ways of reforming Men; by the *Laws* of the *Civil Magistrate*, and by the publick

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Preaching of Ministers. But the most likely and hopeful Reformation of the World must begin with *Children*. Wholsome *Laws* and good *Sermons* are but slow and late ways: The timely and the most compendious way is good Education. This may be an effectual *Prevention* of evil, whereas all after-ways are but *Remedies*, which do always suppose some neglect and omission of timely care.

And because our *Laws* leave so much to Parents, our Care should be so much the greater; and we should remember that we bring up our Children for the *Publick*, and that if they live to be *Men*, as they come out of our hands they will prove a publick Happiness or Mischief to the Age. So that we can no way better deserve of Mankind and be greater Benefactors to the World, than by Peopling it
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with a *Righteous Offspring*. Good Children are the hopes of *Posterity*, and we cannot leave the World a better *Legacy* than well-disciplin'd Children. This gives the World the best Security that Religion will be propagated to *Posterity*, and that the *Generations to come* shall know God, and the *Children that are to be born* shall fear the Lord.

This was the great Glory of *Abraham*, next to his being the *Friend of God*, that he was the *Father of the Faithful*. And the careful Education of Children, in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord*, is so honourable to Parents, that God himself would not pass it by in *Abraham* without special mention of it to his everlasting commendation : *I know Abraham, says God, Gen. 18. 19. that he will command his children and his Household after him to keep the way*
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of the Lord, and to do Justice and Judgment.

Fifthly, Consider yet further, the great Evils consequent upon this neglect. And they are manifold. But not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in *this*, the final miscarriage and ruin of Children. Do but leave depraved corrupt Nature to its self, and it will take its own course, and the end of it in all probability will be miserable.

If the generous Seeds of Religion and Virtue be not carefully sown in the tender Minds of Children, and those Seeds be not cultivated by good Education, there will certainly spring up *Briars* and *Thorns*, of which Parents will not only feel the inconvenience, but every body else that comes near them.

Ne.

Neglectis urenda filix innascitur Agris.

If the Ground be not planted with something that is good, it will bring forth that which is either useless or hurtful, or both : For *Nature* is seldom barren, it will either bring forth *useful Plants*, or *Weeds*.

We are naturally inclined to Evil, and the neglect of Education puts Children upon a kind of necessity of becoming what they are naturally inclin'd to be. Do but let them alone, and they will soon be habituated to Sin and Vice. And when they are once accustomed to do evil, they have lost their Liberty and Choice : They are then hardly capable of good counsel and instruction : Or if they be patient to hear it, they have no power to follow it, being bound
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in the chains of their Sins, and *led captive by Satan at his pleasure*. And when they have brought themselves into this condition, their *Ruin* seems to be *sealed*, and without a Miracle of God's Grace they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the mischief of this neglect end here, but it extends it self to the *Publick*, and to *Posterity*. If we neglect the good Education of our Children, they will in all probability prove bad Men; and *these* will neglect *their* Children; and so the Foundation of an endless Mischief is laid; and our Posterity will be bad Members both of Church and Commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of *Instruction*, they will either be *ignorant* or *erroneous*: Either they will not mind Religion, or they will disturb the Church with new and wild Opinions: And I fear that

that the neglect of instructing and *Catechising* Youth, of which this Age hath been so grossly guilty, hath made it so fruitful of Errors and strange Opinions.

But if besides *this*, no care be taken of their *Lives* and *Manners*, they will become burthens of the Earth, and Pests of Human Society, and so much Poison and infection let abroad into the World.

Sixthly and *Lastly*, Parents should often consider that the neglect of this Duty will not only involve them in the *inconvenience*, and *shame*, and *sorrow*, of their Childrens miscarriage, but in a great measure in the *guilt* of it: They will have a great share in all the Evil they do, and be in some sort chargeable with all the Sins they commit. If the Children bring forth wild and sowre Grapes, the Parents teeth will be set on edge.

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The temporal Mischiefs and inconveniences which come from the careless Education of Children as to *Credit, Health and Estate*, all which do usually suffer by the vicious and lewd courses of your Children; these methinks should awaken your *care and diligence*: But what is this to the *guilt* which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedness will be put upon your score; and possibly the Sins, which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other World, and bring new fuel to Hell, to heat that Furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that *Parents* must one Day be accountable for all their neglects of their *Children*: And so likewise shall *Ministers and Masters of Families* for their *People and Servants*, so far as they

they had the Charge of them.

And what will Parents be able to say to God at the Day of Judgment for all their neglects of their Children, in matter of *Instruction*, and *Example*, and *Restraint* from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when God shall arise terribly to Judgment, and say to you, *Behold! the Children which I have given you; They were ignorant, and you instructed them not; They made themselves vile, and you restrained them not: Why did not you teach them at Home, and bring them to Church to the publick Ordinances and Worship of God, and train them up to the exercise of Piety and Devotion? But you did not only neglect to give them good Instruction, but you gave them bad Example: And lo! they have followed you to Hell, to be an addition to your Torment there.*

Unna.

Unnatural Wretches ! that have thus neglected, and by your neglect destroyed those, whose Happiness by so many bonds of Duty and Affection you were obliged to procure : Behold ! the Books are now open, and there is not one Prayer upon Record that ever you put up for your Children : There is no Memorial, no not so much as of one Hour that ever was seriously spent to train them up to a sense of God, and to the knowledge of their Duty : But on the contrary it appears, that you have many ways contrived their Misery, and contributed to their Ruin, and help'd forward their Damnation. How could you be thus unnatural ? How could you thus hate your own Flesh, and hate your own Souls ? How much better had it been for them, and how much better for you, that they had never been born ?

Would not such a heavy Charge as this make every joint of you to tremble ? Will it not cut you to
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the heart, and pierce your very Souls, to have your Children challenge you in *that Day*, and say to you one by one, *Had you been as careful to teach me the good knowledge of the Lord, as I was capable of learning it : Had you been but as forward to instruct me in my Duty, as I was ready to have hearken'd to it, it had not been with me as it is at this Day : I had not now stood trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal Doom which is just ready to be pass'd upon me : Cursed be the Man that begate me, and the Paps that gave me suck. 'Tis to You that I must in a great measure owe my everlasting undoing. Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our Children in that Great and terrible Day of the Lord ?*

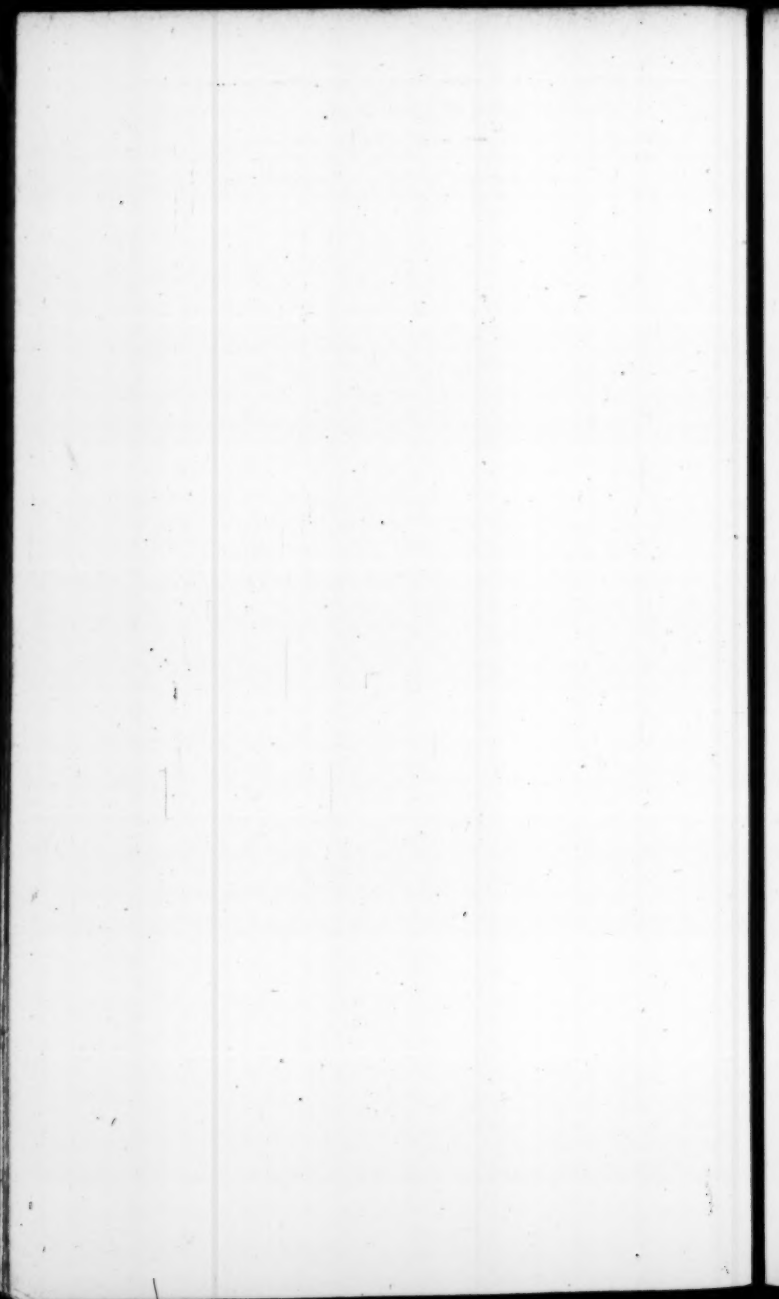
I am not able to make so dreadful a representation of this matter as it deserves. But I would by all

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this, if it be possible, awaken Parents to a sense of their Duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many Parents are as to the Religious Education of their Children, I cannot but think of that Saying of *Augustus* concerning *Herod*, *Better be his Dog than his Child*: I think it was spoken to another purpose, but is true likewise to the purpose I am speaking of: Better to be some *Mens Dogs*, or *Hawks*, or *Horses*, than their *Children*: For they take a greater care to breed and train up *these* to their several ends and uses, than to breed up their *Children* for eternal Happiness.

Upon all these accounts, train up a Child in the way he should go; that when he is old he may not depart from it :

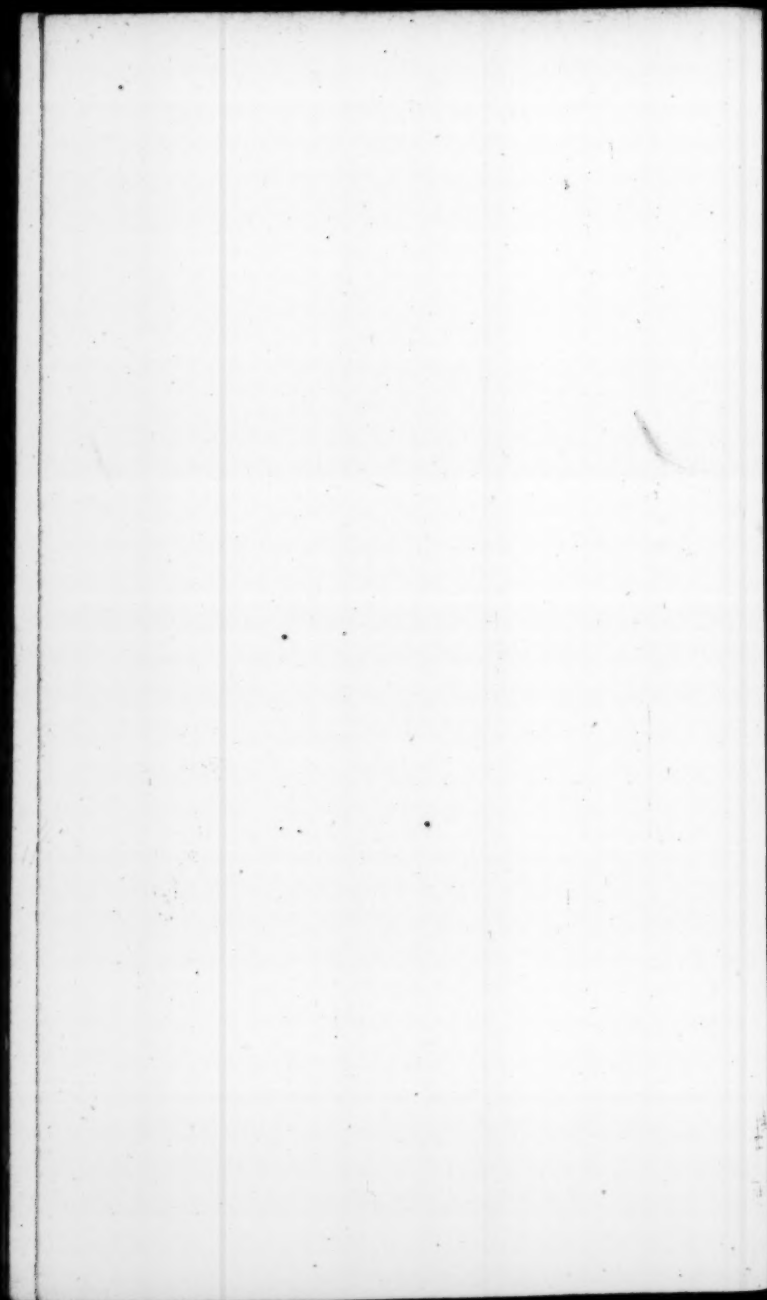
it : That neither your Children may be miserable by your Fault, nor you by the neglect of so natural and necessary a Duty towards them. God grant that all that are concerned may lay these things seriously to heart : For his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ* ; To *Whom* , with *Thee O Father* , and the *H. Ghost* , be all Honour and Glory both now and ever. *Amen.*



S E R M O N VI.

O F T H E

Advantages of an Early Piety.



OF THE
Advantages of an early Piety.

A
S E R M O N
Preached in the
Church of St. *Lawrence* *Jury*,
In the Year 1662.

ECCLES. XII. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days
of thy Youth ; while the evil days
come not, nor the years draw nigh
when thou shalt say I have no plea-
sure in them.*

IN the former *Discourses*, con-
cerning the *Educacion* of *Chil-*
dren, I have carried the Argument
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through the state of *Childhood* to the beginning of the next step of their Age which we call *Youth*; when they come to exercise their Reason, and to be fit to take upon themselves the performance of that *Solemn Vow* which was made for them by their *Sureties* in *Baptism*.

To encourage them to set seriously and in good earnest about this Work, I shall now add another *Discourse* concerning the *Advantages of an Early Piety*. And to this purpose I have chosen for the foundation of it these Words of *Salomon*, in his Book called *Ecclesiastes* or the *Preacher*: Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.

It will not be necessary to give an account of the Context any further than to tell you, that this *Book*
of

of the *Royal Preacher* is a lively description of the Vanity of the World in general, and particularly of the Life of Man. This is the main Body of his *Sermon*, in which there are here and there scattered many serious Reflections upon our selves, and very weighty Considerations to quicken our preparations for our later End, and to put us in mind of *the days of darkness which will be many*, as the *Preacher* tells us in the *Chapter* before the *Text*.

Among these is the Admonition and advice in the words of the *Text* : Which do indeed concern those that are *young*, but yet will afford useful matter of Meditation to persons of all Ages and Conditions whatsoever : Of great thankfulness to Almighty God from those who by the Grace of God, and his Blessing upon a pious Education,

cation, have entered upon a Religious course betimes: And of a deep sorrow and Repentance to those who have neglected and let slip this best Opportunity of their Lives; and of taking up a firm Resolution of redeeming that loss, as much as is possible, by their future care and diligence: And to them more especially, who are grown old and have not yet begun this great and necessary Work, it will minister occasion to resolve upon a speedy retreat, and without any further delay to return to God and their Duty; lest the Opportunity of doing it, which is now almost quite spent, be lost for ever.

The Text contains a *Duty*, which is to *remember our Creator*; and a *Limitation* of it, more especially to one particular *Age* and *Time* of our Life; *in the days of our Youth*: Not
to

to exclude any other Age, but to lay a particular *Emphasis* and weight upon *this* : *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*, that is, more especially in this Age of thy Life : To intimate to us, both that this is the fittest Season, and that we cannot begin this Work too soon.

And this is further illustrated by the opposition of it to *Old Age* : *When the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them* : This is a Description of *Old Age*, the evils whereof are continually growing ; and which in respect of the cares and griefs, the distempers and infirmities which usually attend it, is rather a burthen than a pleasure.

In the handling of these Words,
I shall do these three things,

First,

First, I shall consider the nature of the *Act* or *Duty* here enjoin'd, and that is to *remember God*.

Secondly, I shall consider what there is in the Notion of God as *Creator* which is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige us to the remembrance of Him.

Thirdly, I shall consider the *Limitation* of this Duty more especially to this particular Age of our Lives, *the days of our youth*: Why we should begin this Work then, and not put it off to the Time of Old Age.

- I. I shall consider the nature of the *Act* or *Duty* here enjoin'd, which is to *remember our Creator*. For the understanding of which *Expression* and others of the like nature in *Scripture*, it is to be consider'd that it is very usual in *Scripture* to express *Religion* and the whole

whole Duty of Man by some eminent *Act*, or *Principle*, or *Part of Religion*: Sometimes by the *Knowledge of God*, and by *Faith in Him*; and very frequently by the *Fear* and by the *Love of God*; because these are the great *Principles* and *Parts of Religion*: And so likewise, though not so frequently, *Religion* is express'd by the *Remembrance of God*: Now *Remembrance* is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To remember God is to have him actually in our minds, and upon all proper occasions to revive the thoughts of Him, and as *David* expresseth it, to *set him always before us*: *I set the Lord*, says he, *always before me*, that is, God was continually present to his mind and thoughts.

And in opposition to this we find wicked men in *Scripture* described by the contrary quality,
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- forgetfulness* of God : So they are
Job 8. 13. described in *Job* ; *Such are the paths*
of them that forget God, that is, of
the wicked : And the same de-
scription David gives of them :
Psal. 9. 17. *The wicked*, says he, *shall be turned*
into Hell, and all the Nations that for-
get God : And elsewhere he gives
the same character of a wicked
Psal. 10. 4. man, that God is not in all his
thoughts.

And the course of a Religious
Life is not unfitly express'd by our
Remembrance of God. For to re-
member a Person or Thing is to call
them to mind upon all proper and
fitting Occasions ; to think actual-
ly of them, so as to do that which
the remembrance of them does
require, or prompt us to. To re-
member a Friend, is to be ready
upon occasion to do him all
good offices : To remember a kind-
ness and benefit, is to be ready
to

to acknowledge and requite it when there is an opportunity: To remember an injury, is to be ready to revenge it: And in a word to remember any thing is to be mindful to do that which the memory of such a thing doth naturally suggest to us.

So that to *remember God*, is frequently and in our most serious and retired thoughts to consider that there is such a *Being as God is*; of all *Power and Perfection*, who made us and all other things, and hath given us *Laws to live by* suitable to our *Natures*; and will call us to a strict account for our observance or violation of them, and accordingly reward and punish us; very often in this *World*, and to be sure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of *God and of his infinite Perfections*, and to live continually

tinually under the power and awe of these apprehensions, that He is infinitely wise and good, holy and just; that He is always present with us, and observes what we do, and is intimate to our most secret thoughts, and *will bring every work into Judgment, and every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; as the Preacher tells us in the conclusion of this Sermon.

The Duty then here required of us, is so soon as we arrive at the use of Reason and the exercise of our Understandings, to take God into consideration, and to begin a Religious Course of Life betimes; to consecrate the beginning of our Days and the flower and strength of them to his Service: Whilst our Mind is yet soft and tender, and in a great measure free from all other impressions, to be mindful of the *Being* that is above

us;

us ; and in all our designs and actions to take God into consideration, and to do every thing in his Fear and with an eye to his Glory. *Remember thy Creator*, that is, honour, fear, love, obey and serve Him ; and in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of God, and hath Him continually in his thoughts.

II. I shall in the next place consider, what there is in the Notion of God as our *Creator* that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of God. The *Text* does not barely require us to *remember* God, but to remember Him as the Author and Founder of our Beings : *Remember thy Creator*. And there is certainly some particular *Emphasis* in it, so that God considered under the Notion of our *Creator* is apt to strike us with a particular regard
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and awe of Him. And that upon a *threefold* account; as *Creation* is a sensible demonstration to us *1st.* Of the *Being.* *2dly.* Of the *Power,* and *3dly.* Of the *Goodness* of God.

First, Of His *Being.* The *Creation* is of all other the most sensible and obvious Argument of a Deity. Other Considerations may work upon our Reason and Understanding, but this doth as it were bring God down to our senses. So often as we look up to Heaven, or down upon the Earth; upon our Selves, or into our selves; upon the things without us, and round about us: Which way soever we turn our eyes, we are encounter'd with plain evidences of a *Superior Being*, which made us and all other things: Every thing which we behold with our eyes doth in some way or other represent God to us and bring him to our minds, so
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as we cannot avoid the sight of Him if we would. So the Psalmist tells us, *The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the Firmament shews the work of his hands.* And so likewise St. Paul, *The invisible things of Him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made; even his eternal Power and Godhead.* Psal. 19. 1.
Rom. 1. 20.

Secondly, As the Creation is a demonstration of God's infinite Power. And this Consideration is apt to work upon our Fear, the most wakeful Passion of all other in the Soul of Man: Insomuch that the *Atheist* would fain ascribe the Original apprehension and belief of a Deity to the natural Fears of Men; *Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor*, Fear first made Gods; and by this means would fain persuade us that it is so far from being true that God is our Creator, that He is merely the Crea-

ture of our own vain *Fear* and *Imagination*.

But surely this is very unreasonable. For if there be a God that made us, there is infinite reason why we should stand in awe of Him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts; because He who made us and all other things, if we neglect Him and forget so great a Benefactor, can as easily make us miserable, or turn us out of Being. Therefore *Remember thy Creator*, and despise or forget Him at thy utmost peril.

Thirdly, As the *Creation* is a demonstration of the *Goodness* of God to his Creatures. This Consideration of God as our *Creator* doth naturally suggest to our minds, that his Goodness brought us into Being; and that if Being be a Benefit, God is the Fountain and Author of it, that his Goodness called

led us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are ; for *of his good pleasure we are and were created.* He was under no necessity of doing it ; for He was from eternal Ages happy in himself before we were, and would have been so to all eternity though we had never been ; nor was it possible He could be under any obligation to us before we were.

And He is not only our *Creator* as He gave us our Beings at first, but likewise as we are preserved and continued in Life by the same Goodness which first gave us Life and Breath ; for *of his Goodness we ARE* as well as *were created.*

And can we forget so great a Benefactor, and be *unmindful of the God that formed us* ? Can we chuse but remember the Founder of our Beings, the great Patron and Preserver of our Lives ? And so soon

as we arrive at the use of Reason, and discover this great Benefactor to whom we owe our Lives and all the Blessings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to say with David, *O come, let us worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker : For He is the Lord our God, it is He that hath made us and not we our selves ; we are his People, and the Sheep of his pasture.* I proceed to consider in the

III. and Last place, The Reason of the *Limitation* of this Duty more especially to this particular Age of our Lives, Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them : NOW; in the days of thy Youth; by which Solomon plainly designs two things,

First,

First, To engage young persons to begin this great and necessary Work of Religion betimes, and as soon as ever they are capable of taking it into consideration, Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth. And the Son of Sirach much to the same purpose, speaking of one that in good earnest applies his heart to Wisdom, describes him in this manner, He will give Ecclus. *his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him; which is the same with the expression in the Text, of remembering our Creator in the days of our Youth.*

Secondly, To engage young persons to set about this Work presently, and not to defer it and put it off to the future, as most are apt to do; Remember NOW thy Creator, in the days of thy youth: Especially, not to adjourn it to the most unfit and improper time of all

other, to the time of infirmity and old Age, *N O W*, in the days of thy Youth; when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them: While the Sun, or the Light, or the Moon, or the Stars be not dark-en'd, &c.

And how much reason there is to press both these Considerations upon young persons I shall endeavour to shew in the following Particulars.

First, Because in this Age of our Lives we have the greatest and most sensible obligation to remember God our Creator: In the days of our youth, when the Blessing and benefit of Life is new, and the memory of it fresh upon our Minds. It ought not indeed to be so, but we find it true which Seneca says, *Nil citius senescit quam gratia*, Nothing sooner grows old and
out

out of date than Obligation ; and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greatest reason to remember.

In this Age of our Life, when we begin to come to the free use and exercise of our Reason, the first thing we are instructed in, and if we were not taught it we should, though perhaps more slowly, discover and find it out of our selves : I say, the first thing we are instructed in and inquisitive about is the *Author* of our Beings, and how we came into the World : And when God first appears to our Minds, and we come by degrees clearly to understand by whose Bounty and Blessing it is that we are and have been preserved thus long , without our own care ; principally by the Providence of God, and under Him by those instruments which He hath raised
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and preserved for that purpose : When we consider this, we cannot but be strangely surprised both with the Novelty of the Benefit and the Greatness of it.

And when we have well viewed our Selves, and look'd about us, upon the Creatures below us, all of them subject to our Dominion and use : And when we consider seriously in what a noble Rank and order of Creatures we are placed ; and how fearfully and wonderfully we are made, not groveling upon the earth or bowed down to it, but of a beautiful and upright shape of Body, and such a Majesty of Countenance as if we were all Kings of the Creation : And which is much more excellent than this, that we are endued with Minds and Understandings, with Reason and Speech, whereby we are capable not only of conversing
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with and benefiting one another, but also of the knowledge and friendship and enjoyment of the Best and most Perfect of Beings, God himself: I say when we first consider this and meditate seriously upon it, can we possibly ever after forget God? Shall we not naturally break out into that enquiry which *Elibu* thinks so proper for Man that he wonders it is not in every Man's mouth, *Where is God Job 35. 10, my Maker, who teacheth me more than the* ^{11.} *Beasts of the Earth, and maketh me wiser than the Fowls of Heaven?*

So that there is a very special obligation upon us to be mindful of God in this Age of our Lives, when we first come to the knowledge of Him, and when the sense of his Favours is fresh and new to us; and not only so, but when the Blessing of Life is at the very best and in its verdure and flower; when

when our Health is in its strength and vigor, and the pleasures and enjoyments of Life have their full taste and perfect relish. So Job describes the days of his youth, O

Job 29. 2, *that I were as in months past, as in the*
3, 4. *days when God preserved me; when his*
Candle shined upon my head, and when
by his light I walked through darkness,
as I was in the days of my youth, &c.

Indeed when the evil days are once come, and thou art enter'd upon the years in which thou thy self hast no pleasure, there might be some sort of pretence then to forget God; because then Life begins to wither and decay, and not only the gloss and beauty but even the comfort and sweetness of it is gone, and it becomes an insipid and tasteless thing: But thou art inexcusable, O Man, whoever thou art, if thou art unmindful of God in the best Age of thy Life, and
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when the sense of his Benefits ought upon all accounts to make the strongest and deepest impressions upon thy Mind.

Secondly, The Reason will be yet stronger to put us upon this, if we consider that notwithstanding the great obligation which lies upon us to *remember our Creator in the days of our youth*, we are most apt at that time of all other to forget Him. For that which is the great Blessing of Youth is also the great Danger of it, I mean the Health and Prosperity of it; and though men have *then* least reason, yet are they most apt to forget God in the height of pleasure and in the abundance of all things.

Youth is extremely addicted to pleasure, because it is most capable and most sensible of it; and where we are most apt to be transported, there we are most apt to trans-

transgress. Nothing does so besot the Mind and extinguish in it all sense of Divine things as sensual Pleasures. If we fall in love with them, they will take off our thoughts from Religion and steal away our hearts from God. For no man can serve two Masters; and the carnal mind is enmity against God.

Besides that Youth is rash and inconsiderate, because unexperienced; and consequently not apt to be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future concerns of this temporal Life; much less of that which seems to be at so much a greater distance, and for that reason is so very seldom in our thoughts.

Thirdly, Because this Age is of all other the fittest and best to begin a Religious course of Life. And this does not contradict the

the former Argument, though it seems to do so. For as it is true of Children, that they are most prone to be idle and yet fittest to learn; so in the case we are speaking of both are true, that youth is an Age wherein we are too apt, if left to our selves, to forget God and Religion, and yet at the same time fittest to receive the impressions of it.

Youth is *ætas Disciplina*, the proper *Age of Discipline*; very obsequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of impression and to imbibe any tincture: Now we should lay hold of this golden Opportunity. This Age of suppleness, and obedience, and patience for labour, should be plyed by Parents, before that rigor and stiffness which grows with years come on too fast.

Child-

Childhood and Youth are choice Seasons for the planting of Religion and Virtue, and if Parents and Teachers sleep in this Seed time they are ill Husbandmen ; for this is *the time of plowing and sowing.*

Ifa. 28. 9. This Age is certainly the most proper for Instruction, according to that of the Prophet, *Whom shall he teach knowledge ? Whom shall he make to understand Doctrine ? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breast. For precept must be upon precept and line upon line, here a little and there a little. And the sooner this is done, the better ; only things must be instilled into them gently and by degrees.*

It is a noted Saying of Aristotle, *That young Persons are not fit to hear Lectures of Moral Philosophy ; because at that Age Passion is so pre-*

predominant and unruly: By which, I think, he only means that the Minds of young Persons are least prepared to receive the Precepts of Morality and to submit to them; but that he does not hereby intend, that therefore no care ought to be used to form the Minds and Manners of Youth to Virtue and Goodness. He certainly understood the nature and power of evil Habits too well to be of that mind; and consequently must think that the Principles of Morality ought with great care and diligence to be instill'd into young persons betimes: Because they of all other have the most need of this kind of Instruction, and this Age is the most proper Season for it: And the less their Minds are prepared for it, so much the more pains ought to be taken with them, that they may be taught to govern and subdue their Passions

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Eccles. 25.
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before they grow too stiff and headstrong. So that if the Seeds of Religion and Virtue be not planted in our younger years, what is to be expected in old Age? according to that of the Son of Sirach, *If thou hast gathered nothing in thy Youth, how canst thou expect to find any thing in thine Age?*

Young years are tender and easily wrought upon, apt to be moulded into any fashion; they are *udum & molle lutum*, like moist and soft clay which is pliable to any form; but soon grows hard, and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a very difficult thing to make impressions upon Age, and to deface the Evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good instruction hath been neglected at first, a conceited Ignorance doth commonly take possession, and obstruct all the passages through

through which Knowledge and Wisdom should enter into us.

Upon this Consideration the Work of Religion should be begun betimes, because it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is just the same thing for young persons to be enter'd into a Religious course and to have their Minds habituated to Virtue before vicious Customs have got place and strength in us: For whoever shall attempt this afterwards will meet with infinite difficulty and opposition, and must dispute his ground by inches.

It is good therefore to do that which must be done one time or other, when it is easiest to be done; when we may do it with the greatest advantage, and are likely to meet with the least and

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weakest opposition. We should anticipate Vice, and prevent the Devil and the World by letting God into our hearts betimes and giving Religion the first *seisine* and possession of our Souls. This is the time of sowing our Seed, which must by no means be neglected. For the Soul will not lye fallow; good or evil will come up. If our minds be not cultivated by Religion, Sin and Vice will get the possession of them: But if our tender years be seasoned with the knowledg and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following course of our Lives.

In a word, this Age of our Lives is proper for Labour and Conflict; because Youth is full of heat and vigor, of courage and resolution to enterprize and
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effect difficult things. This heat indeed renders young persons very unfit to advise and direct themselves, and therefore they have need to be advised and directed by those who are wiser and more experienced: But yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are bad at counsel, they are admirable at execution, when their heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickness, of courage and constancy in the way wherein they are set.

Besides, that Youth hath a great sense of Honour and Virtue, of Praise and Commendation, which are of great force to engage young persons to attempt worthy and excellent things: For hope and confidence, strength and courage, with which sense

of Honour and desire of Praise are apt to inspire them, are admirable instruments of Victory and Mastery in any kind; and these are proper and most peculiar to Youth, *I write unto you young men, saith St. John, because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil One.*

And, besides the spirit and vigor of Youth, young persons have several other qualities which make them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, because they have not been often deceived; and this is a very good quality in a Learner. And they are full of hopes, which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their strength; because Hope is always of the future, and the Life of young persons is in a great measure before them and yet

yet to come. And, which is a good Bridle to restrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modest and bashful: And, which is also a singular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honest and commendable than that which is gainful and profitable, being in a great measure free from the love of Money, which Experience, as well as the *Apostle*, tells us is the root of all Evil. Children are very seldom covetous, because they have seldom been bitten by want.

Fourthly, This is the most acceptable Time of all other, because it is the first of our Age. Under the *Law* the first fruits and the first-born were God's. In like manner we should devote the first of our Age and Time to Him. God is the first and most ex-

cellent of Beings, and therefore it is fit that the prime of our Age and the excellency of our strength should be dedicated to Him and his Service.

An early Piety must needs be very acceptable and pleasing to God. Our *Blessed Lord* took great pleasure to see little Children come unto Him ; an Emblem of the pleasure he takes that men should lift themselves betimes in his service. *St. John* was the youngest of all the *Disciples*, and our *Saviour* had a very particular kindness and affection for him; for he is said to be the *Disciple whom Jesus loved*.

It is a good sign that we value God as we ought, and have a true esteem for his service, when we can find in our hearts to give him our good Days, and the years which we our selves have
plea-

pleasure in: And that we have a grateful sense of his benefits and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make the quickest and best returns we can, and think nothing too good to render to *Him* from whom we have received all.

It is likewise an argument of great Sincerity, which is the Soul of all Religion and Virtue, when a man devotes himself to God betimes; because it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by those forcible constraints, nor driven to God by that pressing necessity which lies upon men in time of *Sickness* and *old Age*. And on the contrary, it cannot but be very displeasing to God to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigor of our Age: When our Blood is warm, and our
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Spirits quick, and our Parts are at the best, *then* to think our selves too good to serve God; what an affront is this to Him who hath deserved so infinitely well of us, and beyond the best and utmost that we can possibly do?

Besides, that there is a peculiar kind of grace and loveliness in the worthy and excellent actions of Young Persons, great things being hardly expected from them at that Age. Early Habits of Virtue, like new Cloathes upon a young and comely Body, sit very gracefully upon a straight and well-shap'd Mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is Joy in Heaven at the conversion of a great and old Sinner, so it cannot but be a very delightful Spectacle to God
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and Angels, and to the Spirits of
just Men made perfect, to see a
Young Person besieged by powerful
Temptations on every side,
to acquit himself gloriously, and
resolutely to hold out against the
most violent Assaults: To behold
one, in the pride and flower of
his Age, that is courted by
Pleasures and Honours, by the
Devil and all the bewitching
Vanities of this World, to reject
all these and to cleave steadfastly
to God : Nay, to frown upon
all these Temptations and to
look down upon them with indignation
and scorn, and to say,
Let those dote upon these things,
who know no better: Let them
adore sensual Pleasures and lying
Vanities, who are ignorant
of the sincere and solid Pleasures
of Religion and Virtue:
Let them run into the arms of
Tempta-

Temptation who can forget God their *Creator*, their *Preserver*, and the *Guide of their Youth*: As for me, I will serve the Lord, and will employ my whole time either innocently or usefully, in serving God, and in doing good to Men who are made after the Image of God. This work shall take up my whole Life, there shall be no void or empty Space in it; I will endeavour, as much as possibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the Devil and his Temptations to enter in: Lord, I will be thine, I have chosen thee for my happiness and my portion for ever: *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.* Lo! they that are far from thee shall perish: But it is good for me to draw near to God, to begin and end my Days
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in his fear and to his glory.

Fifthly and *Lastly*, This Age of our Life may, for any thing we know, be the only Time we may have for this purpose; and if we cast off the thoughts of God and defer the business of Religion to old Age, intending, as we pretend, to set about it at that Time, we may be cut off before that Time comes, and *turned into Hell with the People that forget God.*

The Work of Religion is the most necessary of all other, and must be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too soon, but we easily delay it too long; and then we are miserable past all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal Soul, and put his everlasting Happiness upon the greatest hazard

zard and uncertainty, must make Religion his first business and care, must think of God betimes and remember his Creator in the days of his Youth.

I have now done with the three things which I proposed to consider from these Words. The Inferences from this whole Discourse shall be these two,

First, To persuade those that are young to remember God their Creator, and to engage in the ways of Religion and Virtue betimes.

Secondly, To urge those who have neglected this first and best Opportunity of their Lives, to repent quickly and return to a better mind; lest the Opportunity be lost for ever, and their case become desperate and past remedy.

First,

First, To persuade those that are young to *remember* God *their Creator* betimes, and to engage early in the ways of Religion and Virtue. Do not suffer your selves to be cheated and bewitched by sensual satisfactions, and to be destroyed by ease and prosperity. Let not a perpetual tenor of Health and Pleasure soften and dissolve your Spirits, and banish all wise and serious thoughts out of your Minds. Be not so foolish and unworthy, as to think that you have a privilege to forget God when he is most mindful of you; *when the Candle of the Lord shines about your Tabernacle*, and you are enjoying the health, and strength, and sweetness of Life.

No man knows what he does, and what an invaluable Treasure he prodigally wastes, when he
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lets slip this golden Season, and Opportunity of his Life ; whilst he is yet innocent and untainted with Sin and Vice, and his Mind is clear of all bad impressions, and capable of the best ; not enslaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Consider , that the ways of Religion and Virtue are nothing so difficult and unpleasant now, as they will be hereafter: And that the longer you forget God, and the more you are estranged from Him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him and to return to him : That your Lusts will every day gain more strength, and your hearts by degrees will contract such a stiffness and hardness that it will be no easy matter to work upon them.

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Therefore remember your Creator in the days of your youth: To day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin. When will you think of beginning a good course, if not now? You have a great Work before you which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finish'd at once. Your whole Life is no more than sufficient for it; to do it to the best advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your Life, much less of putting it off to the very end of it: When *that night comes, no man can work.*

Consider further; If we will deny God the hearty and vigorous service of our best days, how can we expect that he will accept the faint and flattering

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Devotions of old Age ? Wise men are wont to forecast and provide some stay and comfort for themselves against the evils and infirmities of that Time ; that they may have something to lean upon in their weakness, something to mitigate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark and gloomy Evening : That what they cannot enjoy of present pleasure and satisfaction may in some measure be made up to them in comfortable reflections upon the past actions of a holy and innocent, an useful and well spent Life.

But on the other hand , if we have neglected Religion , and forgotten God days without number ; if we have lived an ungodly and vicious Life , we have treasured up so much guilt and remorse, so many aggravations

tions of our sorrow and anguish against an evil Day; and have foolishly contrived to make our burthen then heaviest, when we are least able to stand under it; and have provided and laid in infinite matter for Repentance, when there is hardly any space and opportunity left for the exercise of it; and when we shall be utterly dishearten'd from setting about so vast a Work, of which we can see no end; and yet have so very little time for it, that if we do any thing at all in it we shall be forc'd to huddle it up in so much haste and confusion, as will, I doubt, signify but very little either to our present comfort, or our future happiness.

Consider this in time, all ye that forget God in the Day of your prosperity and in the best Age of

your Life, and yet when the Day of affliction and the infirmities of Age come upon you would be glad then to have God mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldst not have Him *cast thee off in thine old Age and forsake thee when thy strength fails*, do thou remember Him in the days of thy youth, in the prime and vigor of thine Age: For *this is the acceptable Time, this is the Day of Salvation.*

Therefore acquaint thy self with Him, and remember him *N O W*; in the days of thy Youth; defer not so necessary a work, no not for one moment: Begin it *just now*, that so thou mayest have made some good progress in it before the evil days come; before the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars be darkened, and all the comforts and joys of Life be fled and gone. Be

Be not deceived, O man, who-
soever thou art; for *God is not*
mock'd. He will not be put off
by us *with the Days in which we*
our selves have no pleasure. Offer
up thy self a *living Sacrifice* and
not a *Carcase*, if thou wouldst
be accepted. Do not provoke
and affront the Living God by
offering up to him faint spirits,
and feeble hands, and dim eyes,
and a dead heart. He hath been
bountiful to us in giving us the
best Blessings of Life, and all
things richly to enjoy; and do
we grudge Him the most va-
luable part of our Lives, and
the years which we our selves have
pleasure in? Do we thus requite the
Lord? *foolish people and unwise!*
Is the Giver of all good things
unworthy to receive from us a-
ny thing that is good? If we
offer up the lame in Sacrifice, is it

not evil? and if we offer up the blind, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy Governor, and try if he will be pleased with thee and accept thy person. Hath God deserved so ill at our hands, that we should forget and neglect Him? And hath the Devil deserved so well of us, that we should be contented to spend the best part of our Lives in his Service, which is perfect Slavery? Was he our Creator, or can he make us happy? Nay, does he not carry on a most malicious design to make us for ever miserable?

Secondly, Let me urge those who have neglected this first and best Opportunity of their Lives to repent quickly and return to a better mind, lest all Opportunity of doing it be lost for ever, and their case become desperate and past remedy. Resolve

solve to redeem, if it be possible, the Time which you should have improved: you have squander'd away too much already, waste no more of this precious Opportunity of Life: you have deferr'd a necessary Work too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude your selves with vain hopes that this Work may be done at any time, and in an instant; and that if you can but fashion your last breath into *Lord have mercy upon me*, this will prevail with God and make atonement for the long course of a wicked and sinful Life. What strange thoughts have men of God and Heaven, what extravagant conceits of the little evil of Sin and the great easiness of Repentance, that can impose upon themselves at this rate?

Bethink your selves better in time, *consider and shew your selves men.* What will you do in the day of your distress, who have neglected God in your most flourishing and prosperous condition? What will you say to Him in a dying hour, who scarce ever had one serious thought of him all your Life? Can you have the face at that time to bespeak him in this manner? Lord, now the World and my Lusts have left me, and I feel my self ready to sink into eternal perdition, I lay hold upon thy Mercy to deliver my Soul from going down into the Pit. I have heard strange things of thy Goodness and that thou art merciful even to a miracle. This is that which I always trusted to, that after a long Life of Sin and Vanity thou wouldest at last

last be pacified with a few penitent words and sighs at the hour of Death. Let me not, I pray thee, be disappointed of this hope and put to confusion.

Is this an address fit to be made to a wise man, much less to the all-wise and just Judge of the World? And yet this seems to be the plain interpretation of the late and forc'd application of a great and habitual Sinner to Almighty God in his last extremity, and when he is just giving up the ghost and going to appear before his dreadful Tribunal.

I say again, let no man deceive you with vain words, or with vain hopes, or with false notions of a slight and sudden repentance: As if Heaven were an Hospital founded on purpose to receive all sick
and

and maimed persons, that when they can live no longer to the Lusts of the Flesh and the sinful Pleasures of this World can but put up a cold and formal Petition to be admitted there.

No, No, as sure as God is true, they shall never see the Kingdom of God, who instead of seeking it in the first place make it their last Refuge and Retreat: And when they find themselves under the Sentence of Death and Damnation, only to avoid present Execution, and since there is no other remedy, do at last bethink themselves of getting to *Heaven*, and fall upon their knees to petition the *Great Judge of the World* that they may be transported thither.

Can any man in reason expect that such a Petition will be granted? I tell you Nay; but
ex-

except you repent sooner, and at a fitter time, and after a better fashion, you shall certainly perish. As much as God desires the Salvation of Men, he will not prostitute Heaven, and set the Gates of it wide open to those who only fly to it in extremity, but never sought it in good earnest, nor indeed do now care for it or desire it for any other reason, but to excuse them from going to Hell. They have no value for Heaven, because they are in no wise fit for it, but yet they think Hell to be the worse Place of the two.

The ever Blessed God is Himself abundantly sufficient for his own Happiness, and does not need our company to make any addition to it: Nor yet is Heaven so desolate a Place, or
so

so utterly void of Inhabitants , that like some newly discovered *Plantation* it should be glad to receive the most vile and profligate persons, the Scum and refuse of Mankind. There are an innumerable Company of glorious Angels , much nobler Creatures than the best of Men, to people those blessed Regions. *Thousands of thousands continually stand before God , and ten thousand times ten thousands minister unto Him.*

We do absolutely stand in need of God to make us happy , but He hath no need of us to help Him to be so. God indeed is so good , as to desire our Happiness as earnestly as if it were necessary to his own : But he is happy in and from Himself, and without Him it is impossible we should

should be happy, nay we must of necessity be for ever miserable.

To conclude ; if we would have God to accept us in a dying hour , and our *B. Saviour* to remember us now he is in his *Kingdom* , let us think of him betimes , and acquaint our selves with him that we may be at peace : *N O W* ; before the evil days come , and the years draw nigh when we shall say we have no pleasure in them.

O that men were wise , that they understood this , and that they would consider their latter end. Which God of his infinite Goodness grant that we may all seriously lay to heart , in this our *Day* ; and may learn betimes so to number our days , that we
may

may apply our hearts to wisdom:
For his mercies sake in *Jesus*
Christ, to whom with the *Fa-*
ther and the *H. Ghost*, be all Ho-
nour and Glory, now and for
ever. *Amen.*

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